

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of teaching
assistants' experiences of forming relationships with pupils
who have Autistic Spectrum Disorder in mainstream
primary schools

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Abstract

The increasing numbers of children with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) being educated within mainstream schools and the deployment of Teaching Assistants (TAs) to work with them has resulted in significant challenges in relation to the support and training TAs require when working with pupils who have ASD. Whilst there is a significant body of literature relating to the development of specific interventions for children with ASD there has been little that looks at the relationships formed between professionals, particularly Teachers and TAs, and these pupils.

In order to extend the limited evidence base on the relationships that TAs form with pupils who have ASD this research explored the experiences of a group of six TAs working directly with pupils who had ASD and were in mainstream primary schools, and the relationships that they formed with them. The data collected from the TA interviews was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and subordinate and superordinate themes identified. The findings were then discussed in the context of Interdependence Theory, particularly the investment model put forward by Rusbult and Buunk (1993).

The study found that TAs described their relationships with the children through four main superordinate themes, that is, attachment to the relationship; the difficulties presented by the child; the position they took as TA in the relationship and the personal and professional satisfaction they got from the relationship. The data from the transcripts showed that TAs invested significant amounts of time, effort and energy into developing their relationships and this resulted in rewards and costs for the TAs. These contributed to how satisfied the TAs were with the relationships and how committed they were to them.

The implications for TAs, Schools and Educational Psychologists were discussed, as were the implications for future research.

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Glossary

TA	Teaching Assistant
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
EP	Educational Psychologist
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
SEN	Special Educational Needs

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter outlines the rationale for this piece of research, its aims and purpose and the development of a conceptual framework from which the study was developed.

Furthermore, the chapter explains the position I took in relation to the research and the national and local context of the study, as well as that relating to Educational Psychology.

1.2. RATIONALE FOR RESEARCH

This research looked at the experiences of TAs in forming relationships with pupils who have Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) who were being educated within mainstream primary schools. Six TAs were interviewed and these interviews were then analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) in order to provide qualitative and rich information on the experiences TAs had when supporting pupils who had ASD. In particular, the research aimed to explore the ideas, meanings and sense the TAs made of their relationships with the pupils they were supporting.

There are increasing numbers of children with ASD being educated within mainstream schools and TAs are used in schools to provide general classroom support or as 1:1 direct support for specific pupils. Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people and the world around them (National Autistic Society, 2014). A key feature is a deficit in forming social relationships at an age-appropriate level. Recent statistics from the Department for Education (2015) noted that there were 90,775 pupils in England whose primary need

was ASD and this represented 9% of the total SEN population. Of these, 54,245 ASD pupils had Statements of Special Educational Needs or Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) and this represented 24.5% of the total SEN population with Statements or EHCPs. In state funded primary schools there were 35,030 pupils whose primary need was ASD and this represented 6.5% of the total SEN population in mainstream primary schools in England. 15,820 pupils with ASD who had Statements or EHCPs attended mainstream primary schools and this represented 25.5% of all pupils with SEN who had Statements or EHCPs in mainstream primary schools. ASD was the most common primary need for pupils with Statements or EHCPs in schools in England (DfE, 2015)

At the same time TAs are increasingly being used to work directly with pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools. For example, between November 2013 and November 2014, the number of teaching assistants in England rose by 11,400 (2.8%) to 255,100 and this reflected a rise in TA numbers that has been seen since 2010 (DfE, 2015).

1.3. RESEARCH AIMS AND PURPOSE

The primary research aim was to explore the experiences TAs had of the relationships they formed with the pupils with ASD they were supporting in mainstream primary schools. The research purpose was exploratory in that it did not set out with a particular hypothesis but was seeking to provide a detailed examination of each TAs personal lived experience of the relationship, the meaning of that experience to them and how the TAs made sense of that experience.

This research aimed to add to the existing body of knowledge on the work TAs do with pupils who have ASD and to address the paucity of research on how relationships

develop between pupils with ASD and the TAs who support them. This will help to inform TAs, Schools and Educational Psychologists, as well as the wider educational profession, as to the processes that are at work when TAs form relationships with pupils with ASD.

1.4. RESEARCHER'S POSITION

I was interested in exploring the experiences TAs had of developing relationships with pupils with ASD. I have had a long-standing interest in working with both young people on the autistic spectrum and teaching assistants in schools and, through professional work in schools, have noted the demands upon TAs in mainstream schools when working with pupils on the autistic spectrum. In particular, I have been interested in how TAs connect and form relationships with the pupils they support, particularly given the difficulties pupils with ASD have with social interaction and communication. It is also the case that TAs are, more often than not, the people who spend the most time with the pupils they support in school and so they have a unique and very relevant perspective to offer.

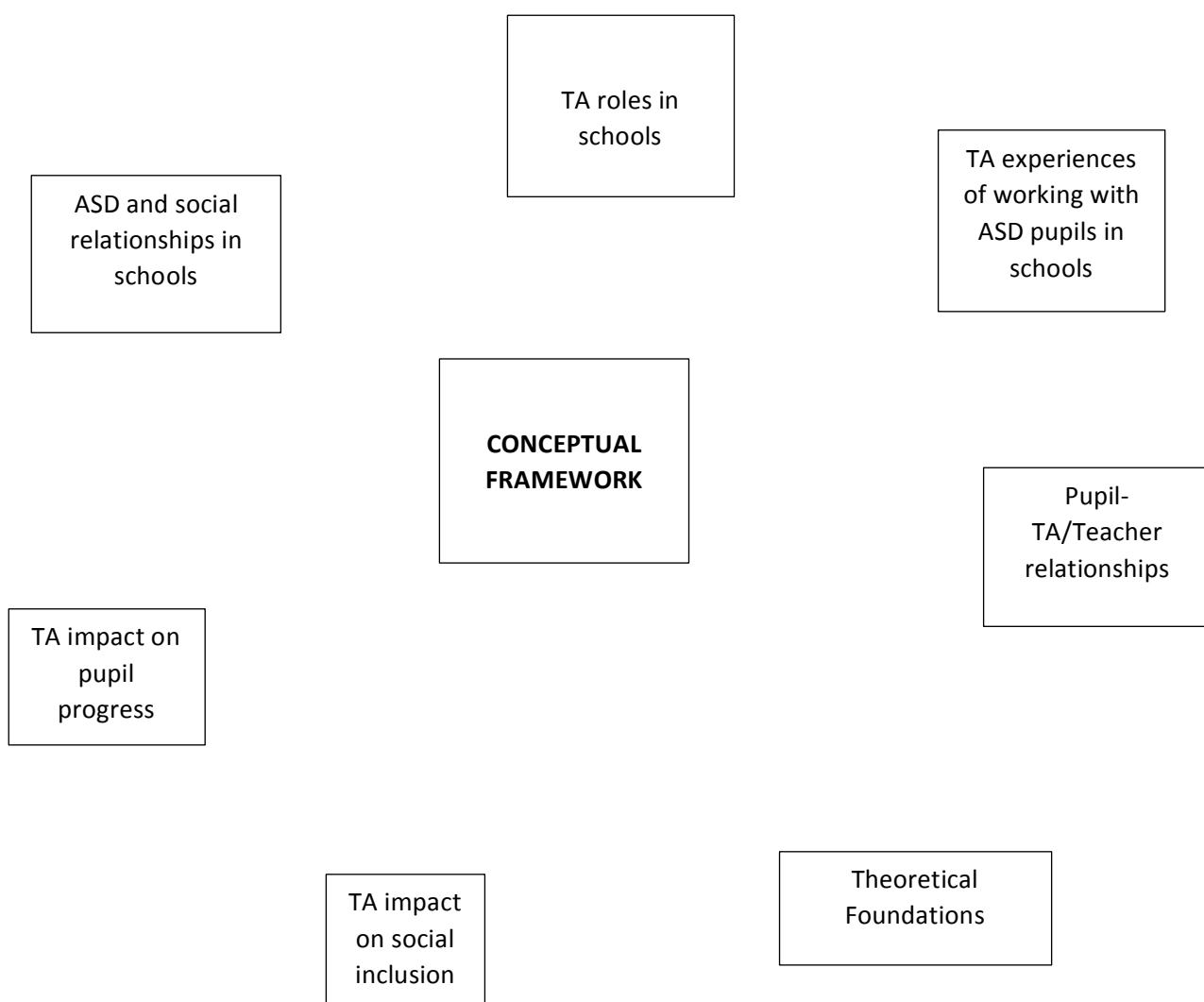
Furthermore, some research has been very critical in relation to the impact TAs have on the children they support (Blatchford et al, 2009a; Farrell et al, 2010) but, at the same time, there is very little research that reflects the experiences of the TAs and how they feel about the relationships they have built with a challenging population of pupils, namely those with ASD.

1.5. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Carroll and Swatman (2000) noted that a conceptual framework sets out to provide a structure for a study through development of research themes, which are informed by a literature search and the personal and professional experiences of the researcher. Miles and Huberman (1994) noted that the conceptual framework sets out the researcher's understanding of the research themes and what is to be explored.

A conceptual framework (Figure 1) was developed to provide a broad structure for the research themes to be explored.

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework



1.5.1. ASD and social relationships in schools

Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people in the world around them (National Autistic Society, 2014). A key feature of ASD is difficulties in forming social relationships at an age appropriate level (American Psychiatric Association, 2013)

Many parents of children with ASD choose to educate them in mainstream schools with the view that they will have greater opportunities for social interaction with typically developing peers. Children with ASD were more socially engaged at school if they had access to typical children in the playground (Sigman et al., 1999) whilst some parental reports noted that their child's inclusive experience was characterised by peer acceptance and being able to form meaningful friendships with their classmates (Ryndak et al., 1995; Staub et al., 1994). However, children with ASD were more often on the periphery of their social networks, reported poorer quality friendships and had fewer reciprocal friendships compared with typical children in the same classroom (Kasari et al., 2011). Furthermore, pupils on the autistic spectrum were at substantially greater risk of being excluded from school compared with typically developing peers (Humphrey & Lewis, 2008).

1.5.2.TA roles in schools

The role of TAs is multifaceted with different studies highlighting the complexity and range of their work in schools. The Department for Education and Skills (2003b) outlined four key roles of TAs, namely supporting pupils, teachers, the school and the curriculum, whilst Blatchford et al. (2009a) identified six roles that TAs had in schools, namely:

1. Support for teachers and/or the curriculum.
2. Direct learning support for pupils.

3. Direct Pastoral support for pupils.
4. Indirect support for pupils.
5. Support for the school (administrative/communicative).
6. Support for the school (physical environment).

The research noted that, of all of these roles, TAs spent the greatest amount of time supporting pupils.

The majority of TAs working with pupils with ASD who were in mainstream secondary schools worked with just one pupil at a time and worked in a variety of lessons with their primary role being to help pupils to stay focused and follow instructions (Symes & Humphrey, 2011). This supported the view that the TAs' role was primarily rooted in working with children identified with SEN (Webster, Blatchford & Bassett et al., 2010).

1.5.3. TA impact on pupil progress

Blatchford et al. (2009b) noted that TAs had a positive effect in terms of providing pupils with more individual attention and increasing participation in classroom activities but that pupil interaction with teachers decreased when TAs were present. Pupils who received most TA support made less progress than similar pupils who received little or no TA support (Blatchford et al., 2012) and TA support had a small or no effect on attainment (Higgins & Gulliford, 2014). Saddler (2014) criticised these studies as they focussed solely on statistical, academic outcomes and gave no acknowledgment to the influence of TAs on social inclusion. Furthermore, the studies failed to provide substantial qualitative data concerning TAs' influence on the process of social inclusion (ibid.)

However, Rose (2001) noted that teachers regarded the role of TAs as critical to the successful inclusion of pupils with ASD with TAs having a more positive attitude

towards the pupils than teachers, who could report feeling tensions towards pupils with ASD (Emam & Farrell, 2009).

1.5.4. TAs impact on social inclusion

Pupils with special educational needs were more likely to experience poorer social inclusion than their peers (Frederickson, Jones & Lang, 2010; Hall & McGregor, 2000) whilst pupils with ASD were more likely to be excluded from school than other groups of SEN pupils or typically developing pupils (DfCSF, 2009; Humphrey & Lewis, 2008). Indeed, social inclusion was seen as both a potential benefit and challenge for pupils with ASD (Humphrey & Symes, 2013). Teachers of pupils with ASD experienced tensions when working with them and these tensions could impact on the quality of teacher-pupil interactions. As a result of this, teachers tended to rely heavily on TAs and saw the TA role as being indispensable (Emam & Farrell, 2009)

1.5.5. Pupil- TA/Teacher relationships

A primary role of TAs in schools is in building rapport and relationships with students (DfES, 2003a). Indeed, the strong pastoral relationship built between children identified with SEN and TAs could positively influence pupils' social inclusion (Saddler, 2014). However, Saddler concluded that there had been little research on TAs influence on social inclusion and that further research was needed.

Teachers of pupils with ASD reported that the difficulties presented by these pupils often made it difficult to have a positive relationship with them (Robertson et al., 2003) and that the difficulties the pupils had with social and emotional understanding were a primary factor in tensions in their relationships with the pupils (Emam & Farrell, 2009). Humphrey and Symes (2013) noted that subject teachers reported difficulties coping with

ASD behaviours such as rigid thinking, lack of social understanding, lack of eye contact and poor turn-taking skills.

1.5.6. Theoretical Foundations

Where research studied the experiences of participants and the meanings they gave those experiences the theoretical perspective was phenomenological. Interpretative

Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) in research is a qualitative approach concerned with analysing personal experiences, the meaning of experience to participants and how participants make sense of that experience (Smith, 2011). IPA has been used to research areas within education and, in relation to ASD, has been used to look at the experiences of pupils with ASD themselves. Hill (2014) looked at the experiences of 6 pupils with ASD who were in two mainstream secondary schools and noted that the themes that emerged for the group were sanctuary, anxiety and young people as active agents.

Humphrey and Lewis (2008) looked at the experiences of 20 pupils with Asperger Syndrome from four secondary schools and noted that a central theme was how participants constructed their understanding of what their AS meant to them, which was often characterized by negative perceptions of their differences.

1.6. RESEARCH CONTEXT

This section sets out the national and local context of the research and looks at its context within Educational Psychology.

1.6.1. The National Context

At a national level TAs are widely used in schools to support pupils with special educational needs and, as pupils with ASD represent nearly 10% of the SEN population (DfE, 2015), this research investigated relationship dynamics in a significant population in UK schools. TAs also represent a significant proportion of schools' workforce and so this research is relevant in that it adds to the current research on the role of TAs working with pupils who have ASD in mainstream schools and, potentially, provides new information on the relationships they formed with these pupils. It also provided the TAs with an opportunity to reflect upon their relationships with the pupils they supported and helped towards an understanding of their role supporting pupils with ASD in schools.

1.6.2. The Local context

The research used TAs based in a cluster of mainstream primary schools in and around a busy town within a large County local authority. This local authority had 885 pupils with Statements where ASD was the main diagnostic category and so TAs working with these pupils represented a significant population within the local authority.

The schools where the TAs in this sample were recruited belong to a local development group cluster of schools in the local authority and the majority of these schools are Academies or federations of Church Schools.

1.6.3. Context within Educational Psychology

Educational Psychologists routinely work with TAs, teachers and pupils with ASD and training for TAs and teachers in relation to ASD is common for EPs to deliver in schools. Research has highlighted the importance of TAs in supporting pupils with SEN and, in particular, ASD in schools (DfES, 2003b). Given that research has indicated that TAs have the main responsibility for supporting pupils with Statements and EHC Plans and that they have a high level of responsibility for explaining, implementing and modifying tasks set by the class teacher (Webster, Blatchford & Russell, 2013), it can be argued that EPs have a very significant role to play in relation to training of TAs in schools and supporting them in their work. It is also the case that research has indicated that TAs are not always adequately prepared for supporting pupils as the teachers don't allocate time to communicate with them and prepare them for tasks but 70% of school leaders felt that TAs preparedness was improved through targeted training and discussions with professionals (Blatchford, Russell & Webster, 2012). A systematic review of studies where TAs had been trained noted a significant number of papers where TA performance improved following training (Cajkler et al., 2007). Higgins and Gulliford (2014) noted that when EPs undertook school-based training with TAs in mainstream secondary schools, TA self-efficacy in contributing to student outcomes improved, which contributed to their effectiveness and overall school improvement. One aspect that came out from the study as being important in training was the development of positive relationships with staff and children. This study highlighted how EPs might support the development of practices, which aimed to enhance TA self-efficacy, which in turn contributed to change over time.

Sharples, Webster and Blatchford (2015) reviewed the role of TAs in school and noted that schools should provide sufficient time for TA training and for teachers and TAs to meet out of class to enable the necessary lesson preparation and feedback.

EPs have a valuable role to play in this process and research that contributes to the understanding of how TAs develop relationships with ASD pupils will, potentially, add to the knowledge EPs have when engaging in work with TAs who are supporting pupils with ASD.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the approach that I took in order to investigate and analyse the current body of research in relation to the experiences teaching assistants had of forming relationships with pupils who have ASD. The chapter sets out the search strategy I used in order to identify specific research papers for critiquing through applying inclusion and exclusion criteria. These papers were then critiqued using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme for qualitative studies and the framework by Creswell (2009) for quantitative or mixed methods studies. This appraisal was then applied to the literature review question in order to explore the quality of that research and its relevance.

2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW BACKGROUND

2.2.1. Literature Review Approach

The literature review was undertaken between October 2015 and June 2016 (Appendix 1). I used the following structure as a framework for conducting my literature review:

1. I identified a literature review question.
2. I developed Inclusion and Exclusion criteria.
3. I identified potential keywords.
4. I searched databases, relevant journals and authors.
5. I identified key papers for critiquing.
6. I critically appraised key papers.

7. I appraised the relevance of key research papers in the context of the literature review question.

2.2.2. Literature review question

The following literature review question was identified:

‘What do empirical studies tell us about teachers’ and TAs’ relationships with pupils who have Autistic Spectrum Disorder?’

This question was developed to investigate the current body of knowledge in the area of teachers’ and TAs’ relationships with pupils who have ASD.

2.2.3. Inclusion and Exclusion criteria

I identified the following inclusion and exclusion criteria, which were applied when searching for relevant literature.

Table 1: Inclusion and Exclusion criteria

INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
Empirical research that focuses on the relationships between teachers/ teaching assistants and pupils with ASD	Secondary research
	Non-empirical research
	Participants who are not students with ASD, teachers or teaching assistants
Published research from 1995 onwards	Published in a language other than English language
	Unpublished research

2.2.4 Keywords and search terms

A range of search terms and Boolean phrases were used to search for relevant literature. The words and phrases were used both separately and in varying combinations and details of the databases used, search terms, inclusion and exclusion criteria, number of papers found and relevant papers are set out in Appendix 1. A summary of the search terms is found in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Keywords and Search Terms

SEARCH NAME	SEARCH TERMS
ASD	ASD; Autistic Spectrum Disorder; Autism; Autistic Spectrum Condition; Asperger Syndrome
Teaching Assistants	Teaching Assistants; TAs; Learning Support Assistants; LSAs; Paraprofessionals; Special Education Assistants
Teachers	Teachers; Educators
Relationships	Relationships; student-teacher relationships; student-Teaching Assistant relationships; Interpersonal relationships
Experiences	Experiences

The search terms were applied in PsychINFO (via EBSCO host) and the number of hits and relevant studies that met the inclusion and exclusion criteria are set out in Appendix 1. As a result of the searches seven studies were identified which met the inclusion / exclusion criteria.

2.2.5 Appraisal of review literature

I followed a two-stage process in appraising the selected research papers. Firstly, I looked at appraising each study individually in respect of their quality and relevance to the literature review question. Secondly, I appraised the selected group of research studies to

determine what they said about the current state of knowledge about the experiences teachers and TAs have in forming relationships with pupils who have ASD.

The qualitative studies that met the inclusion criteria were appraised using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP, 2013), which uses 10 questions to help appraise qualitative research studies. I used these as a framework to critique each study and help develop an understanding of how relevant each study was to the literature review question. Quantitative or mixed methods studies that met the inclusion criteria were appraised using Creswell (2009) as a framework.

2.3 REVIEWS OF SELECTED LITERATURE

2.3.1. Tensions experienced by teachers and their views of support for pupils with autism spectrum disorders in mainstream schools (Emam, M.M. & Farrell, P., 2009)

Overview

This research explored the tensions that teachers in mainstream schools experienced when working with and supporting pupils with ASD and their views of the support provided for the pupils. The researchers observed 17 pupils with ASD aged between 7 and 16 years who were in mainstream classes and then carried out interviews with their teachers, teaching assistants and special educational needs coordinators. A multiple case study design based on Yin (2003) was employed with the researchers noting that the ‘present study relied on detailed descriptions of the cases (i.e. pupils with ASD) in order to explore holistically the potential tension experienced by teachers as a result of the inclusion of these pupils’ (p.409). Data was collected via semi-structured interviews with teachers, TAs and Sencos as well as from observations inside and outside classrooms. The 17 ASD pupils were of average or above intellectual and linguistic abilities. The

researchers analysed the data using a combination of thematic analysis and grounded theory analysis, which was carried out in two phases. The first phase was a description of the 17 participants followed by coding the interview observation data using Atlas Ti 5.2 qualitative analysis software to identify themes within and across cases. The researchers then looked at the similarities and differences among 17 cases and developed a conceptual framework, which described the key themes determining the quality of the relationship between the teachers and pupils with ASD.

Key findings

The study reported that the tensions that existed for teachers were primarily a result of the nature of the ASD and how it presented within the pupils being supported. In particular, the pupils' difficulties with social and emotional understanding were a significant cause of tension. The research further noted that teachers reported that they tended to rely heavily on the TAs in order to manage their tensions and that they found the role of the TA to be indispensable in this regard. The researchers concluded that the relationship between the teachers and pupils was essential in managing the tensions that ensued and in providing for effective support and inclusion. They discussed these findings in relation to the development of a conceptual framework for successful inclusion of pupils with ASD and concluded that successful inclusion resulted in participation for pupils with ASD in school; that support potentially impacted upon that participation and that teachers' motivation, skills and attitudes were determined by how they accepted the pupils with ASD.

Critique of study

In this study there are two main aims 1) to identify tensions experienced by the teachers and 2) to identify their views of support for pupils with ASD in mainstream schools.

These aims were clearly articulated in the two research questions formulated in the paper. This was felt to be important as the researchers noted that teachers of pupils with ASD faced significant difficulties in meeting the needs of these pupils and this was likely to have an impact on the quality of the teachers' relationships with those pupils. The study did identify and detail the tensions experienced by the teachers and did articulate the teachers' views of support but the study also went beyond these parameters by conducting observations of pupils with ASD, which bore little relevance to the research questions, and by making causal claims about the relationship between the tensions identified and the quality of the transactions and interactions between the teachers and pupils. Furthermore, the researchers made other causal claims such as noting a direct link between the pupils' difficulties with recognition of embedded emotions and their relationship with teachers, which went beyond the parameters of the research study and where it was difficult to see on what evidence they were able to make those links.

The researchers set out their study as being in the context of the conceptual model of the pupil-teacher relationship developed by Pianta (1999), an ecological model that examined the features of relationships, the processes by which information is exchanged and external influences of the systems in which the relationship is embedded. They used their findings to develop a conceptual framework, which described the dynamics of social inclusion for pupils with ASD in schools in the context of their relationships with the teachers and the support they received. The conceptual framework they developed did seem to fit within the ecological model but this was not generated as the grounded theory within the discussion but was brought in within their conclusions, almost at the end of the paper, and was then used as an explanation of the dynamics of social inclusion for pupils with ASD.

The methodological approach used by the researchers was clear in the sense that they referenced their approach against Yin (2003) as a multiple case study design designed to investigate specific phenomena i.e. tensions experienced by teachers and their views on support of ASD pupils. Thus the need to interview teachers was appropriate as their views were central to the study. However, the need to interview Teaching Assistants and Sencos seemed less obvious and deviated from the central research questions they formulated. Indeed, there was no mention within the study about how many teachers, TAs or Sencos were interviewed and there was no information given about those professionals. The need to provide information from observations of ASD pupils, particularly with TAs and Sencos, also seemed to be away from the primary research questions and actually didn't provide useful evidence to answer the research questions in the study. The researchers did discuss the design of the study by stating that it 'relied on detailed descriptions of the cases' (p.409) with the aim of exploring the tensions holistically but it was unclear as to how this data contributed to their findings.

The researchers identified the participants in this study as the 17 pupils who had ASD and this created confusion, particularly given that the research questions were in relation to the tensions experienced by teachers. The teachers, TAs and Sencos were all interviewed and so were participants but the paper was clear that the pupils were the participants and noted considerable detail about their cognitive and reading skills, which seemed largely irrelevant to the primary research questions. The selection of the pupils as participants appeared to be contrived to a large degree to get a cross section of pupils with ASD with varying types of support, from no support to 20 hours per week, and the rationale for this was not clearly explained so that the reader could understand how it linked to the research questions. The sampling strategy was to include pupils with ASD who were of average or above cognitive and linguistic ability but no rationale was given as to why this sample of

pupils was used and, since they were using a grounded theory approach, there would be an expectation that a theoretical sampling strategy would be employed rather than a purposive sample, which this research appeared to rely on.

The researchers described their analysis of the data as being a combination of case study analytic strategies, thematic analysis and grounded theory. This was confusing in that the analysis followed the stages of a grounded theory piece of research through the use of codes, concepts and categories but the researchers then argued causal relationships between themes developed rather than articulating a theory of what was actually happening and stating the theory as an explanation of what was happening with the teachers. For example, they moved from discussions about the difficulties present in pupils with ASD as impacting upon teachers' relationships to reflecting 'a lack of rigorous evidence with regard to positive outcomes of having a TA in the classroom' (p 419). There appeared to be little evidence in the research to substantiate this causal relationship and they didn't articulate a theory on which they were basing those conclusions.

Overview of Critical Appraisal of the study in the context of the literature review question

The research set out to look at the tensions experienced by teachers working with ASD pupils and set two clear research questions. These tensions were then examined in detail and the impact on support arrangements were discussed. In that regard the researchers did address their research questions and related their discussion to the themes developed. The researchers did note that the findings were complex and 'sometimes discrepant' (p.418) but did present clear themes and a coherent argument as to the tensions that existed for teachers working with pupils who had ASD. However, the research then strayed from the

primary research questions by reflecting on the impact of having TAs in the classroom and then started to discuss issues about TA outcomes in the classroom, which was outside the parameters of the stated research questions and this was confusing as the researchers went on to then look at a range of other issues including the role of TA support. The use of a grounded theory approach was clearly articulated but they did not generate a theory or use theoretical sampling in the cycle that would be usual in grounded theory research.

There were clearly findings in this study that were relevant to my literature review question. Firstly, the study identified that the tensions noted by the teachers were shaped by the nature of the ASD difficulties of the pupils, particularly in relation to social and emotional understanding, and that these difficulties impacted upon the relationship between the pupils and teachers. Secondly, teachers reported that the TAs had an indispensable role to play in managing these tensions through their support of the pupils and that this impacted upon the relationship between the teachers and pupils with ASD. Finally, the researchers concluded that teacher-pupil relationships were a factor in social inclusion and participation of pupils with ASD in schools. The research did produce valid evidence about teachers' tensions and their view of support in schools for pupils with ASD but the flaws noted in relation to sampling, participant selection, methodological inconsistencies and the development of causal relationships that went beyond the parameters of the research meant that there was limited weight that could be given to this study in relation to my literature review question. However, it was relevant in pointing out that further research was needed in the area of relationships between teachers and pupils with ASD and its impact on social inclusion.

2.3.2 School Factors that facilitate or hinder the ability of teaching assistants to effectively support pupils with autism spectrum disorders in mainstream secondary schools (Symes, W. & Humphrey, N., 2011)

Overview of study

This research investigated the school factors that influenced TAs in supporting pupils with ASD in mainstream secondary schools. The researchers interviewed 15 TAs from four mainstream secondary schools where 11 were employed directly by the school whilst 4 were employed by an outside agency. A thematic analysis was applied to the interview data. The specific objectives identified by the researchers were, firstly, to develop and understanding of the aspects of school culture that TAs felt contributed to inclusion and, secondly, to identify aspects of school policy and practice that impacted upon the TAs' ability to effectively support pupils with ASD. The data was collected as part of a larger project on inclusive education for pupils with ASD.

Key findings

The researchers identified four main themes that represented the aspects of school culture that TAs felt contributed to inclusion for pupils with ASD. These were, firstly, that the TAs had positive attitudes towards the pupils with ASD; secondly, that they were positive about school leadership support for inclusion, thirdly; that collaboration and teamwork were important and, finally, that pupils respected each other. They further noted that TAs wanted to find out which strategies to use and to access expertise. The researchers noted that, whilst there had been a number of reviews evaluating the impact of TAs in primary, secondary and special school settings there had been little research exploring the experiences of TAs of pupils with SEN and very few looking specifically at TAs who

were supporting pupils with ASD. They also noted that the majority of research in this area had focussed on teachers' views and less was known about the views of TAs.

Critique of study

The researchers set out their rationale for the research as adding to the knowledge about inclusive education for pupils with ASD and noted that there had been little research exploring the experiences of TAs of pupils with SEN. They set out specific objectives for the research, which were 1) to develop an understanding of the aspects of school culture that TAs felt contribute to inclusion and 2) identify aspects of school culture, policies and practice that facilitated or hindered their ability to effectively support pupils with ASD.

The methodological approach was clearly stated as being phenomenological and the researchers noted the phenomena being studied as 'the features of the school environment that TAs felt facilitated or hindered their ability to effectively support pupils with ASD in mainstream secondary schools' (p. 156). The use of semi-structured interview was appropriate and the rationale for that was explained clearly. The use of thematic analysis was appropriate in the context of the research questions and methodology.

The participants were 15 TAs who supported pupils with ASD across 4 mainstream secondary schools and so was an appropriate purposive sample to use in order to try and answer their research questions, that is, they were TAs supporting pupils with ASD. However, no information was given about how the sample was selected or how the 15 TAs were chosen other than that the four schools were selected systematically from a pool of 12 schools and that this was based on data on key outcomes in relation to inclusive practice. Therefore, the sample of TAs came from schools that had been specifically selected as being good examples of inclusive practice and so it is possible that the TAs in these schools were not, necessarily, a representative sample of TAs

supporting pupils with ASD in secondary schools. If the TAs in these schools were already examples of good practice, which is likely in schools identified as having good inclusive practice, then asking these TAs about the factors that helped or hindered their ability to effectively include pupils with ASD might result in different themes compared with themes that might emerge from TAs across a random sample of secondary schools. Indeed, it would be clearer if they had referenced their research questions as being relevant to schools identified as having good inclusive practice rather than discussing their findings in relation to secondary schools in general.

Detailed information is given about each of the participants and it was noticeable that the TAs had a wide range of time they had been employed and also seven out of fifteen had no formal training on ASD. No information was given about the severity of the pupils with ASD such as whether they had Statements of Special Educational Needs.

Data was collected via semi-structured interview and these interviews were transcribed and collated in Nvivo 7, a computerised quantitative analysis programme. The researchers clearly set out how the thematic analysis was undertaken following a model set out by Braun and Clarke (2006). They also noted examples of passages that did not conform to the emergent themes. The analysis followed the process usual in a detailed Thematic Analysis study in that codes were developed and themes emerged from the data. The data was clearly reported as being from the TA reports and transcripts and the researchers were meticulous in referencing specific codes and quoted examples from these transcripts and interviews. However, in the discussion the researchers did generalise their findings when they stated that their analysis identified both components of an inclusive school culture and the factors that assisted or hindered the ability of TAs to effectively include pupils with ASD. Whilst these were certainly findings reported by the TAs in their sample it was difficult to generalise these further, particularly when the

schools the TAs worked in were specifically identified as being ones where good inclusive practice was already taking place.

Overview of Critical Appraisal of the study in the context of the literature review question

This piece of research did directly look at the experiences of TAs who worked with pupils with ASD and so, in that regard, it was broadly relevant to my literature review question. However, it did not specifically look at the relationships between them and the pupils but rather focused on specific school factors that impacted upon the TAs' support and how this related to effective inclusion for those pupils. The TAs did not produce data that developed themes relating to the relationship between them and the pupils they were supporting and this might have been down to the slant of the semi-structured interview questions and the focus on school factors. The study was well constructed as a piece of qualitative research and the use of thematic analysis was appropriate, detailed and relevant to the research questions they posed. However, the relevance overall to my literature review question was limited by the lack of reference to relationships between TAs and the pupils with ASD and so has limited relevance. It did, however, indicate that further research was required in the area of investigating TAs' experiences of working with pupils with ASD that was wider than evaluating specific interventions, TA training and experience and should look at how pupils with ASD can be effectively supported and included in schools.

2.3.3 Exploring teachers' strategies for including children with autism spectrum disorder in mainstream classrooms (Lindsay, S. et al., 2014)

Overview of study

This research investigated teachers' strategies for creating an inclusive environment within the classroom for pupils with ASD. The researchers interviewed a sample of 13 elementary schoolteachers in order to gain an understanding of their experiences in working with children who have ASD. The researchers then identified emergent themes around strategies of teaching children with ASD and discussed them within the context of an inclusive pedagogy approach developed by Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011).

Key findings

The researchers concluded that teachers had several strategies for including children with ASD including 1) advocating for resources and essential training; 2) tailored teaching methods; 3) teamwork within the school; 4) building a rapport with parents and students; and 5) building a climate of acceptance within the classroom through disability awareness, education and sensitivity training. Furthermore, they noted that teachers often emphasised the abilities of the children and minimised their differences and promoted a strongly inclusive teaching approach. The researchers further concluded that successful inclusion for children with ASD relied upon providing proper training and resources; working within a team to find the best strategies for inclusion; tailoring teaching methods that matched the student's interests and abilities; having an open communication system with parents and the child to establish which strategies work best and building a climate of acceptance within the classroom or disability awareness.

Critique of study

The researchers noted that their research question was to explore teachers' strategies for including children with ASD in mainstream classrooms. Furthermore, this was felt to be relevant as there had been relatively little previous research on how teachers created and sustained inclusive mainstream classrooms in relation to children with ASD and that pupils with ASD presented specific challenges in mainstream classrooms, particularly in relation to behavioural and social difficulties.

The study was a qualitative piece of research, which the researchers described as 'an interdisciplinary descriptive study' (p.103). They used in depth interviews with a sample of 13 elementary school teachers. They then transcribed the interviews and then sorted and categorised the data according to emergent themes around strategies of teaching children with ASD. They did not use a particular method of analysis, such as thematic analysis, but rather relied on an 'open coding approach where an in-depth understanding of the teachers' experiences was developed' (p.104). They achieved this by having two of the researchers reading through the data and noting themes, then developing codes for themes with similar meanings and comparing this through discussion within the research team. They noted that this audit trail of key decisions established the trustworthiness of the research. This data analysis was meticulous and detailed and the themes developed were clearly explained in detail in the results section with reference to specific examples from the transcripts to illustrate the themes.

The participants were 13 elementary school teachers, which the researchers claimed was a purposive sample and, indeed, the participants were selected against inclusion criteria i.e. that they had at least 2 years of teaching experience in a mainstream class, taught in an integrated class in elementary school and had experienced in teaching a student with

ASD in a mainstream class. The participants in this study were relevant, therefore, to the research question.

The researchers identified a number of strategies that teachers used for including children with ASD in mainstream classrooms and they set these strategies out clearly. They compared their findings with a specific approach developed by Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) and discussed their findings in the context of this approach and noted a degree of consistency with that model in their findings. The focus of the discussion was predominantly on the principles of the teaching approach that supported inclusive education and the researchers did note inconsistencies in that certain strategies were targeted specifically for children with ASD and their particular needs, which they felt might heighten social exclusion. However, they also noted that some of the strategies were necessary, such as minimising behavioural outbursts, and this was appropriate in developing an individualised approach on those occasions. The researchers also noted limitations of the study in that it was a relatively small quantitative sample but did also note that their findings were consistent with similar past studies.

Whilst this was a well-constructed, qualitative study and the data collected was used to answer the research question via the themes, it was also the case that the small nature of the sample made it difficult to generalise the findings to a wider population. Given that the aim of the research was to identify strategies that the teachers used to support inclusion for pupils with ASD, the links the researchers made between their study and its application to the wider teaching community went beyond the scope of the research. For example, they recommended specific strategies that teachers could use and implied that these would promote successful inclusion. This claim went beyond the data in the research study as no evaluation had taken place of the specific strategies and their

effectiveness and so it was difficult to generalise these strategies as being effective for the wider population of teachers who support pupils with ASD.

Overview of Critical Appraisal of the study in the context of the literature review question

This piece of research focused predominantly on the teachers' strategies they used to promote successful inclusion for children with ASD in mainstream schools. Where it was relevant to my literature review question was in relation to the themes relating to building a rapport with the students. The researchers noted that several teachers discussed the importance of building a warm and caring relationship with the child so that they felt comfortable within the class. They quoted from teachers who noted the importance of building solid relationships, which helped them to feel more confident and more comfortable in the classroom. This was relevant to the literature review question as it indicated that there was some evidence to support the relationship between teachers and pupils with ASD as having an impact on inclusion. However, it was less relevant in the context of it being primarily a piece of research about mainstream inclusion for pupils with ASD.

2.3.4 General Education Teachers' Relationships with Included Students with Autism (Robertson, K.; Chamberlain, B. and Kasari, C., 2003)

Overview of study

This research investigated the relationship between general education teachers and students with autism in general education classrooms. General education teachers are equivalent to mainstream class teachers in the UK. The study examined teachers' perceptions of their relationship with pupils with autism, how this perception was

affected by the presence of paraprofessionals (teaching assistants) and by behaviour problems presented by the child, and the pupils' level of social inclusion. Teachers from 12 classes, each containing one pupil with autism, completed the Student-teacher Relationship Scale, which rated their relationship in relation to conflict, closeness and dependence. They also completed the SNAP-IV scale, which rated behaviours of the pupil with autism in relation to inattention, hyperactivity/impulsivity and opposition/defiance. The researchers also examined social inclusion by asking the other children in the class to name pupils who associated together. They then allocated a point for every time a child was listed as belonging to the same group of peers and then rated the pupils between 0-3 on social inclusion, with 0 being socially isolated and 3 being the highest level of social inclusion. These scores (0-3) were developed by the researchers based on clusters of points scored for affiliation with peers. Finally, the researchers noted that half of the pupils with autism were supported by a paraprofessional (teaching assistant).

The researchers then undertook correlational analyses both within and between these measures to look at the relationships between them.

Key findings

The researchers reported, through correlational analysis of the data, three main findings. Firstly, teachers reported generally positive relationships between them and the pupil with autism. Where they rated behavioural problems more highly this was associated with lesser quality of the teacher-student relationship. Secondly, the quality of the teacher-student relationship was associated with the level of social inclusion of the child and, finally, the presence of a paraprofessional (teaching assistant) did not affect the quality of the teacher-pupil relationship.

Critique of study

The stated aim of this study was to examine the perceived relationships between mainstream class teachers and children with autism in their classes. In order to investigate the relationships the researchers used the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale, which is a 28-item scale and references the relationship in relation to conflict, closeness and dependency. The researchers applied statistical, correlational analysis to this data and noted both positive and negative associations between these three domains. However, they failed to include any reference in their results to an overall relationship score for the teachers and yet, in their discussion, they noted the first finding as being that teachers generally reported positive relationships with the pupils with autism. This was not referenced in the data and it was unclear as to where they got their evidence from for this finding.

In relation to the finding that when teachers rated behavioural problems in the children more highly this was associated with a lesser quality student-teacher relationship, they arrived at this conclusion on the basis of a correlational analysis between rated scores on the SNAP-IV behavioural scale and scores on the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale. There are issues with this as the SNAP-IV is a behavioural rating scale that specifically looks at behaviours related to inattention, impulsivity, hyperactivity and oppositional-defiance. It is usually used to give information about pupils with potential attention deficit difficulties and so the parameters of the behaviours rated on this scale were limited and it is questionable as to the relevance of using this with pupils who have autism, as they were likely to present with additional behaviours to those used on the SNAP-IV. Therefore, to make a generalisation that scores on this scale relate to behaviour in general went beyond the scope of the data in the study.

The finding that the quality of the relationship was associated with social inclusion as measured by peer ratings was one that arose, again, from correlational analysis of scores generated on the Student-teacher Relationship Scale and scores generated from peer ratings of the children with autism. Firstly, there were ethical considerations about asking peers to rate their classmates in terms of social involvement with peers as it could have placed the children in the class in a difficult position when asked to talk about their peers and raised issues around possible coercion. Secondly, the researchers used their own points system to develop a three-point scale of social inclusion for the children with autism and the manner in which they did this is questionable in terms of its validity as it relied on peers' ratings of which children associated together. This, therefore, seemed to be a contrived measure that was open to high variability in terms of scoring and interpretation.

Overview of Critical Appraisal of the study in the context of the literature review question

This piece of research did look specifically at student-teacher relationships in the context of children with ASD and the study identified that the child's behaviour could impact on the relationship between the child and the teacher. Furthermore, the research noted that there was no difference in the student-teacher relationship when a paraprofessional was present and that the student-teacher relationship was associated with social inclusion. However, the flaws in the design and data analysis through generalising findings beyond the data evidence, as well as the questionable use of peer ratings of social inclusion and the use of a limited behaviour rating scale, meant that the study was limited in its relevance to my literature review question. Given that the goal of the research was to examine teachers' perceptions of their relationship with pupils with autism, the use of rating scales seemed to limit the opportunity to explore the perceptions in depth and

limited the teachers to answering questions within specific parameters, such as conflict, closeness and dependence, rather than being able to explore the relationships in greater detail.

2.3.5 Training, Inclusion and Behaviour: Effect on Student-Teacher and Student-SEA Relationships for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (Brown, J.A. & McIntosh, K., 2012)

Overview of research

This research investigated the student-teacher and student-special education assistant (SEA) relationships with students who had ASD. In particular, the study investigated problem behaviour and the quality of student-teacher/SEA relationship as well as whether the percentage of time receiving the general education curriculum had an impact on the student-teacher/SEA relationship. Finally, the study also looked at whether training in ASD had an impact on the student-teacher/SEA relationship. Special Education Assistants are equivalent to teaching assistants in the UK.

The study identified the participants as 15 boys aged 6-9 years who had ASD and were in mainstream classrooms, their teachers and their special support assistants. The pupil participants were recruited through district autism support teams and the criteria for selection onto the study was that they needed to have been in mainstream education on a full time basis and were diagnosed with ASD. Student-teacher relationships were measured using the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS); problem behaviour was measured by the Behaviour Assessment System for Children 2 (BASC-2) using the Behavioural Symptoms Index of the Teacher Rating Scale; training in ASD was measured using questionnaires created by the researchers and percentage of time in the curriculum was the percentage of time the student participated in the same curriculum as

the rest of the class. The teachers and SEAs completed the STRS and BASC-2 and multiple regression analyses were conducted on the data to look for correlations.

Key findings

The study found that the level of problem behaviour and percentage of time receiving the general education curriculum significantly predicted the student-teacher relationship but not the student-SEA relationship and that training in ASD did not significantly predict either relationship. The researchers noted that, from statistical analysis, problem behaviour was the strongest predictor of the student-teacher relationship and that an increase in problem behaviour was associated with a decrease in the quality of the student-teacher relationship at a statistically significant level ($p < 0.01$). Problem behaviour did not predict student-SEA behaviour.

Critique of study

The researchers outlined the purpose of the study as being to identify key variables that were associated with student-teacher relationships ‘to determine which factors can be targeted to improve these relationships’ (p.80). Furthermore, the researchers wanted to determine whether the percentage of time the student received the general education curriculum and problem behaviour were related to the student-teacher and student-SEA relationship. This was clearly explained.

The researchers themselves noted limitations of the study and particularly noted the small sample size and exploratory nature of the study. They also noted the poor internal consistency of the STRS total scale and the Behavioural Symptoms Index of the BASC-2. They further noted that the use of regressions analyses on such a small sample was a limitation of the study. It was also the case that there was questionable use of the STRS and BASC-2 use with the SEAs, as these items were standardised on teachers and not

SEAs. In both cases the teacher rating scales were used and this raised doubt, therefore, as to the validity of their use with SEAs.

In making associations about problem behaviour in pupils with ASD and student-teacher relationships there were other variables that needed to be considered and the researchers did note that the classroom environment and the nature of presenting behaviours in pupils with ASD could have had an impact. For example, the social interaction and communication difficulties associated with ASD were likely to impact on the development of social relationships. Information on the level of severity of ASD of the pupils and their social interaction communication skills was not something that was made available in the study. There was also the issue that, when making associations between behaviour and relationships, there needed to be a consideration as to which might cause which. The study firmly set out that problem behaviour predicted student-teacher relationships but not student-SEA relationships but equally it might have been that that it was the relationship that predicted the behaviour. For example, a teacher or SEA who struggled in developing a relationship with a pupil with ASD might have impacted upon the pupils' behaviour. This is a difficulty the study had when making generalisations from correlational analyses of the data when other variables could potentially have explained a link.

Overview of Critical Appraisal of the study in the context of the literature review question

This study was relevant to my literature review question in that it did look at the relationships between students with ASD and their teachers / SEAs and did identify certain associations that occurred in respect of problem behaviour. It was interesting that there was a relationship between the problem behaviour of the students and the student-

teacher relationship but not in the student-SEA relationship. The researchers discussed this difference and noted that, from analysis of their data, the student-SEA relationship was higher than that found between the students and their teachers and that the SEAs viewed their relationship with students as being more positive. However, the SEAs did also perceive more problem behaviours in the students and the researchers hypothesised that this might be because the SEAs worked with the students more intensively through 1:1 support.

However, whilst the study did relate to the literature review question in exploring the relationships between students with ASD and teachers / SEAs there were flaws in the design of the study, issues around the use of the standardised measures with SEAs as well as factors relating to the nature of ASD that needed to be considered in terms of social relationships with pupils who have ASD. Whilst the statistical analyses were robust in the study the researchers themselves noted limitations of using regression analysis on such a small sample.

Overall, though, the study had relevance to the literature review question and did identify the need for further research that examines the relationships between pupils with ASD and teachers or SEAs.

2.3.6. Autism spectrum disorder and the student-teacher relationship: a comparison study with peers with intellectual disability and typical development (Blacher, J. et al, 2014)

Overview of study

This study looked at the relationship between behaviour problems, social skills and student-teacher relationships within a sample of children with autism spectrum disorder

in non-public schools and compared this with samples of children with typical development or with intellectual disability. The researchers used standardised assessments so that teachers could rate the student-teacher relationship, the students' behavioural problems and their social skills and they applied statistical analysis to the data in order to look at the relationships between these variables.

The sample consisted of 36 pupils with ASD in non-public schools for children with ASD along with comparison groups of 38 pupils with intellectual disability and 91 pupils with typical development.

The researchers measured the student-teacher relationship using the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS), which produced scores for conflict, closeness and dependence as well as an overall score. Behaviour was measured using the Child Behaviour Checklist and was rated by the children's parents. Social skills were measured using the Social Skills Rating System, which was completed by the children's parents and teachers. Social Responsiveness was measured using the Social Responsiveness Scale and was completed by the children's parents and teachers.

Parents received \$50 for participation whilst teachers received \$25 for taking part in the study.

Key findings

The researchers noted that the student-teacher relationships for children with ASD were lower compared with those of similarly aged children with learning difficulties or typical development and this was a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.01$). In particular, less closeness and more conflict were seen in the student-teacher relationships for children with ASD when compared with the to other comparison groups. Furthermore, the researchers noted that student-teacher closeness, as perceived by the teachers, was

accounted for mainly by the child's social skills while student-teacher conflict was accounted for mainly by behavioural problems. They further noted that there was less closeness between the teacher and student when there was evidence of more autism symptomatology.

Critique of study

In this study teachers were asked to complete standardised rating scales of student-teacher relationships, behavioural problems and social skills. The participants in the study were described as '165 children and their teachers' (p.326) with a sample of 36 children with ASD being compared to samples of children with intellectual disability (n=38) and typical development (n=91). It is noteworthy that the sample of children with ASD was from two non-public schools i.e. specialist settings for pupils with ASD. The comparison groups were 'a sample of convenience from another ongoing study' (p.326) with children with developmental delays being recruited through community agencies and children with typical development being recruited primarily through preschools and day care programmes. Therefore, there was a considerable difference between the educational setting for the pupils with ASD and those with learning difficulties or typical development in that pupils with ASD were from two specialist settings whilst the participants from the two comparison groups or from a wide range of school settings. Therefore, it is likely that other factors might have influenced ratings of student-teacher relationships, particularly in the two comparison groups, as there was no evidence of teacher experience, quality or level of training thus making comparisons between the groups quite open to interpretation. There was also an ethical issue in this study in that both parents and teachers received monetary awards for participation in the research, which potentially raised issues around coercion and manipulation as well as consent.

The researchers themselves noted the limitations of self-report measures such as the STRS used in this study. The researchers did undertake regression analyses and clearly reported the data and statistical significances on which they based their findings. The researchers did limit their findings mainly to the data in their study and resisted generalising out into wider populations. Indeed, they were very clear about the limitations of their study and that future research was required to look at the wide-ranging factors that might influence the relationship between students with ASD and their teachers.

Overview of Critical Appraisal of the study in the context of the literature review question

This study was relevant to my literature review question in that it noted that student-teacher relationships for children with ASD, as reported by the teachers, were notably different from those relationships with children who had learning difficulties or those with typical development. In particular, the idea that pupils with ASD were less close to their teachers and more in conflict with them than pupils with learning difficulties or typical development and that there was a relationship between presenting behavioural problems, social skills and student-teacher relationships raised significant issues about the impact of the relationship teachers develop with pupils who have ASD. The study gave multifaceted information about the dynamic of relationships between pupils with ASD and their teachers and the correlation between pupil behaviour, ASD presentation and social skills added to the limited database of research on the relationships between pupils with ASD and teachers / teaching assistants. Whilst there were some limitations within the study it was, overall, relevant to my literature review question although the information on the teachers' experiences of the relationship was less a feature of the study as this was limited by the parameters of standardised assessments rather than teachers having the opportunity to talk about their experiences directly.

2.3.7. Longitudinal associations between externalising problems and student-teacher relationship quality for young children with ASD (Eisenhower, A.S., Blacher, J. & Bush, H.H., 2015)

Overview of study

This study looked at the associations between student-teacher relationship quality and externalising behavioural problems among 166 children with ASD. The researchers undertook measures of student-teacher relationships, cognitive functioning and behavioural problems and reassessed after six months and then a further year to look at trends over time and over two school years.

Participants were aged 4-7 years of age and ranged from pre-school to second grade. All had a diagnosis of ASD and the researchers measured the student-teacher relationship using the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS). Cognitive ability was measured using the Wechsler Pre-school and Primary Scale of Intelligence III (WPPSI-III) and the children's behaviour problems were measured using the Caregiver-Teacher Report Form and Teacher Report Form, depending on the child's age. Participants needed to have an IQ score of 50 or above to be included in the study.

The measures were repeated after 6 months and one year from the original assessment.

Parents received \$50 per visit whilst teachers received \$25 per visit.

Key findings

The researchers found that the association between student-teacher relationship quality and external behavioural problems was not transactional i.e. early teacher-reported behaviour problems were associated with poorer relationship quality over time and this persisted across different teachers. Furthermore, higher externalising behavioural problems predicted increased student-teacher conflict over the same school year and also

predicted increased student-teacher conflict and decreased student-teacher closeness in the subsequent school year. The researchers concluded that the behavioural problems demonstrated by the child with ASD appeared to drive the changes in the child's relationships with teachers and that these followed them across multiple teachers and classroom contexts. Finally, the researchers noted that there was no effect seen in relation to cognitive ability or intellectual disability status, although it was noted that no pupils with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities were enrolled on the study.

Critique of study

This study set out very clear research questions and used standardised rating scales completed by teachers of pupils with ASD to measure student-teacher relationships, externalising behavioural problems and cognitive ability. The researchers then subjected the data to detailed statistical analysis including multiple regression analysis and transactional analysis to look at the associations between student-teacher relationships, externalising behavioural problems and cognitive ability. A strength of the study was that it was conducted over one-and-a-half years and so was able to look at the associations between the variables over time and compare them with different teachers. Furthermore, a large sample was used and the researchers ensured that all the children met detailed criteria for diagnosis of ASD and they also conducted standardised cognitive testing so that they could look at the correlation between cognitive ability and the student-teacher relationship.

The study did have limitations in that it did not include pupils whose cognitive ability was within the moderate learning difficulties or severe learning difficulties category and so it was questionable as to whether the study was able to generalise the view that cognitive ability was associated with student-teacher relationships for pupils with this

level of cognitive ability. The researchers also noted that their sample consisted of predominantly white children of European-American heritage and so were unable to control for cultural factors that might have influenced student-teacher relationships.

The researchers resisted making causal claims in this study that went beyond the scope of the data. For example, whilst they reported a causal impact of externalising behaviour on student-teacher conflict and closeness but they also noted that this was only a possibility and did note that other factors or unexamined variables might have impacted on this.

The study contained very detailed statistical analyses using regression analysis and transactional analysis within a longitudinal study. The fact that they repeated their assessments over two time points added to the reliability of their results as did the use of a large sample.

There was an ethical issue in that parents and teachers were paid for their participation and this could have lead to issues around coercion, manipulation and consent. It is possible, for example, that parents or teachers might have felt under pressure from the researchers if they were being paid by them.

Overview of Critical Appraisal of the study in the context of the literature review question

This study did relate to my literature review question in that it examined the student-teacher relationships with pupils who had ASD and was able to improve on previous studies by looking at the impact of variables such as externalising behaviour and cognitive ability on student-teacher relationships over time. It is interesting that the researchers noted that their research didn't examine the quality of relationships with other school personnel, including teaching assistants, and suggested that research looking into

these relationships would be useful. This was relevant to my literature review question as it suggested research that was needed in the area of relationships between teachers/TAs and students with ASD.

2.4. SYNOPSIS OF SELECTED LITERATURE

The literature review question asked ‘what do empirical studies tell us about teachers’ / Teaching Assistants’ relationships with pupils who have Autistic Spectrum Disorder?’ From the literature search I conducted seven studies met the inclusion / exclusion criteria for in-depth analysis.

The seven studies selected all examined, to a greater or lesser degree, the relationships between teachers or TAs and pupils with ASD and so were relevant to the literature review question in that regard. Four of the studies examined student-teacher relationships (STRs) for pupils with ASD in the context of within-child factors such as behavioural issues, social skills, ASD symptoms and cognitive ability and external factors such as presence of a TA, social inclusion, change of teacher and class. Teachers generally reported positive relationships between them and the pupils with ASD (Robertson et al, 2003) but the student-teacher relationship was lower than that seen for pupils of a similar age with learning difficulties or typical development (Blacher et al, 2014). Behavioural problems were correlated with the quality of the student-teacher relationship with higher reported behavioural problems associated with lower quality STRs (Robertson et al, 2003; Brown & McIntosh, 2012; Blacher et al, 2014) and that these problems drove the changes in the child’s relationships with teachers over time across multiple teachers and classroom contexts (Eisenhower et al, 2015). STRs were also positively correlated with the level of social inclusion and the child’s level of social skills (Robertson et al, 2003;

Blacher et al, 2014). There was also an association between higher ASD symptomology and lower STR quality (Blacher et al, 2014).

Teachers could find working with pupils who have ASD challenging and they reported that these tensions were primarily the result of the particular difficulties pupils with ASD have with social and emotional understanding (Emam & Farrell, 2009). They also reported that TAs were essential in helping manage these tensions and that successful relationships between teachers and pupils with ASD were essential in providing for effective support and successful inclusion (ibid). Teachers also reported the importance of building a relationship with students with ASD as one factor in developing social inclusion (Lindsay et al, 2014)

Teaching Assistants were regarded positively by teachers (Emam & Farrell, 2009) and TAs reported positive attitudes towards pupils with ASD, felt that collaboration and teamwork were important and they were positive about school support for inclusion of pupils with ASD (Symes & Humphrey, 2011). The relationship between TAs and pupils with ASD was not associated with problem behaviours in the child and the level of training in ASD also had no association with the relationship between TAs and the pupils with ASD (Brown & McIntosh, 2012) and yet training in ASD was seen as important for teachers and TAs in relation to successful inclusion for pupils with ASD (Lindsay et al, 2014; Symes & Humphrey, 2011)

Therefore, the seven research papers selected for the literature review suggested that there were many factors that were associated with the relationship between teachers / TAs and pupils with ASD and that this relationship was important, particularly in relation to inclusion. There was also a common conclusion in the papers that further research was necessary to look into the dynamics of relationships between teachers/ TAs and pupils

with ASD particularly in relation to the experiences of TAs working with pupils who have ASD.

The research papers reviewed were, overall, of variable quality in relation to their methodological approaches and research design. Some demonstrated robust research designs where the methodology was clearly constructed to answer the research questions. For example, the studies by Symes and Humphrey (2011), Lindsay et al (2014), Blacher et al (2014) and Eisenhower et al (2015) provided well-constructed designs where the methodological approach was clearly identified as being relevant to the research and where participants chosen were appropriate to answering the research questions. These studies generally drew conclusions from the data and resisted making causal claims outside of that data. The other studies analysed (Emam & Farrell, 2009; Robertson et al, 2003 and Brown & McIntosh, 2012) contained flaws in their methodological approaches, such as confusion over sampling and participant inclusion, making causal claims that were not driven by the data in their studies and some ethical issues relating to payment of participants.

There was a clear difference noted between some of the studies that emanated from the US and those from the UK. The US studies relied heavily on the use of standardised rating scales to break down relationships into identifiable variables such as closeness, conflict and dependence and using correlational analysis to establish connections between these factors and variables such as behaviour of the pupils. Whilst this provided useful information on factors that might influence student-teacher relationships these studies did lack richness in the data, which would have been gathered from interviewing the participants to find out their personal experiences. The UK studies focussed more on the themes that were elicited from teachers and TAs through interviews and so the richness of data was evident in these studies and provided a context that was more relevant to

educational practice in the UK. For example, factors such as the tensions experienced by teachers when working with pupils who have ASD and the school factors that influence how TAs support pupils with ASD have greater relevance to practitioners such as teachers, TAs and Educational Psychologists than the US research which focussed on student-teacher relationships through the identification of correlations between discrete variables identified in those relationships.

The research studies analysed all identified aspects of the relationships between teachers, TAs and pupils with ASD to varying degrees but it was clear from analysis of these studies that there was no research that specifically looked at the experiences of TAs in forming relationships with pupils with ASD and this was an identifiable gap in the research literature, which this current study addressed. This led to the central research question in this current study being on the experiences TAs had of forming relationships with pupils with ASD in order to add to the current existing literature on TAs and their work with pupils with ASD in mainstream schools. This study is original in its contribution to the existing research by specifically looking at the relationships between the TAs and the pupils they supported and offers new insight into the relationships between TAs and pupils with ASD whilst also complementing the previous research on student-teacher relationships and that on teacher and TAs' experiences of working with pupils who have ASD in mainstream schools.

In summary, currently there is a limited database of research that examined the relationships between teachers and TAs with pupils who have ASD. Where there was research in this area it highlighted the importance of this relationship in effective inclusion for pupils with ASD and the role of teachers and TAs in supporting that inclusion. However, there was a consensus that further research was required to examine the dynamics of the relationships between teachers/TAs and pupils with ASD further.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a rationale for the choice of methodology and the method adopted for this research project. There are a range of possible methodologies and methods available to the researcher (Crotty, 1998) and informing this should be decisions about the worldview assumptions the researcher brings to the study, the procedures of enquiry and the specific methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation (Creswell, 2009).

This chapter begins with a discussion of the ontological and epistemological stance I took, which informed the choice of research questions, method and analysis. Then I explore the settings and contexts within which the research was conducted and discuss how I sought to address any ethical difficulties. The chapter then concludes with a discussion on the reliability and validity of the study and the role of reflexivity within the research.

3.2 SELECTION OF METHODOLOGY

3.2.1 Methodological orientation

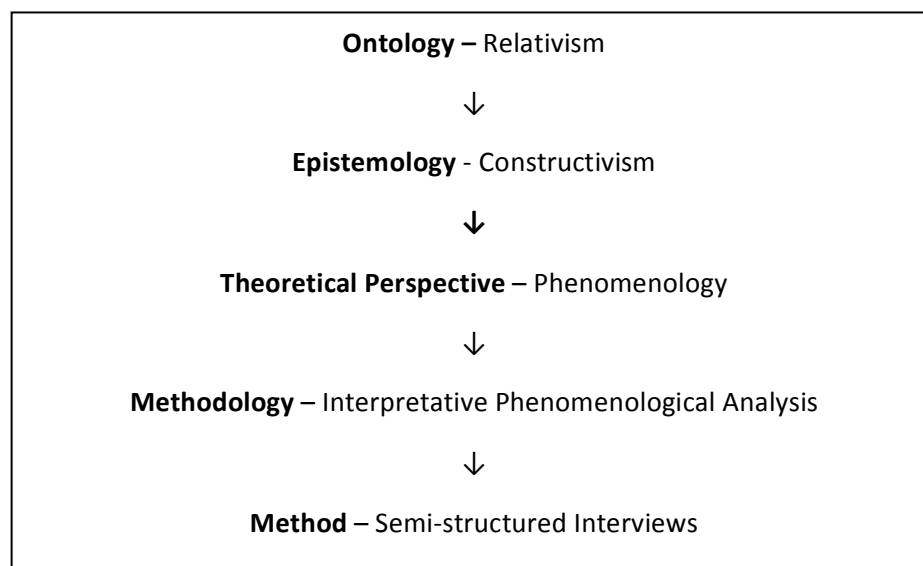
This research examined the experiences of TAs of their relationships with pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in mainstream primary schools. I chose to conduct this research within a qualitative framework and this informed my choice of methods. This was a result of my own theoretical orientation that individuals seek to understand the world they live and work in and that, in doing so, they develop subjective meanings of their experiences. This relativist ontological position is in contrast to realist traditions of

psychological research in which causes determine effects or outcomes (Creswell, 2009) and argues that knowledge is constructed by individuals seeking meaning as they engage in the world they are interpreting (Crotty, 1998).

Research design usually takes one of three forms, namely qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods, which are on a continuum rather than seen as polar opposites (Creswell, 2009). However, the researcher's ontological and epistemological position dictates which type of research design is appropriate and, in this regard, I chose a qualitative approach as this study specifically explored the individual, lived experiences of TAs in forming relationships with pupils with ASD and examined the meanings they ascribed to those experiences. Thus a qualitative research design fitted with the relativist ontological position and constructivist epistemological stance taken in this study.

The overall methodological approach adopted within the present study is discussed in depth later in this chapter but is summarised below (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Summary of philosophical foundations underpinning the research study



3.2.2 Ontology and epistemology

Ontology

Ontology refers to what knowledge is or what can be known and is concerned with the nature and structure of reality (Crotty, 1998). Realism assumes that the world contains truths and that knowledge can be reduced to discrete variables that can be tested in an objective reality (Creswell, 2009). Within this ontology reality is thought to be independent of human perception and cognition and that there are discrete facts about the world that a researcher can investigate in a quest for objective knowledge (Crotty, 1998).

In contrast to this a relativist ontology assumes that meanings are constructed by people as they engage with the world they live in and interpret it based upon their experiences (Creswell, 2009). The world is seen, therefore, as an interaction between the objective and the subjective and knowledge is a construction of reality as seen from certain perspectives and based upon individual perceptions (Crotty, 1998).

This current study is based upon a relativist ontological position in that relationships are seen as subjective and are the result of the individuals' experiences rather than based upon a set of truths or facts about relationships that could be tested and verified. I explored TAs' experiences of their relationships with pupils with ASD from the position of assuming that the TAs each had their own construction of reality based upon their own perceptions of what that reality was. In this study their perceptions of the relationships they had with pupils who have ASD were explored in order to identify the meanings these relationships had for the TAs.

Epistemology

Epistemology refers to how we know what we know and the theory of knowledge. It provides a philosophical background for deciding which kinds of knowledge are legitimate and adequate and is important in research design in that it can help to clarify issues around the design of the study and help the researcher recognise which design will work in relation to his or her ontological position (Gray, 2013).

An objectivist epistemological stance is rooted in a realist ontological position and argues that reality exists external to the researcher and must be investigated through the rigorous process of scientific enquiry (Crotty, 1998). In contrast constructivism is rooted in a relativist ontological position and argues that truth and meaning do not exist in an external world but are created by people's interactions with the world. As a result meanings are constructed and people construct their own meanings in different ways even in relation to the same phenomenon (Gray, 2013). Therefore, multiple, contradictory but equally valid accounts of the world can exist at the same time (ibid.)

This current study was based upon a constructivist epistemological stance as teaching assistants were seen as having constructed their own meanings about the relationships they formed with pupils who had ASD and that each TA had a unique perspective to offer on their relationship with the pupil they were supporting.

3.2.3. Theoretical Perspectives

The theoretical perspective that underpins this research is phenomenology, which is the study of personal experience rather than the belief that a phenomenon can be reduced to a convenient number of identifiable variables, which can be tested. Phenomenology developed from the work of Edmund Husserl, a philosopher who believed that experience should be examined in the way that it occurs and in its own terms (Smith et al, 2009).

Husserl's ideas were further developed by the philosopher Heidegger, who felt that people's engagement in the world was a feature of their ability to communicate with, and make sense of, each other and so the interpretation of people's meaning-making activities is central to phenomenological inquiry in psychology (Smith et al, 2009). The philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre developed this further to pursue the idea that people are self-conscious and seek after meaning but, in doing so, they actively seek meaning by engaging with the world they inhabit. Therefore, existence for people is an interactive process focused on discovering meaning about their relationships to the world and others. Heidegger also developed the idea of hermeneutics, which is a theory of interpretation and is central to phenomenological psychology. This is based upon the idea that there is a dynamic relationship between the part and the whole, a hermeneutic circle, which operates at a number of levels and that 'to understand any given part, you look to the whole; to understand the whole, you look to the parts' (Smith et al, 2009 p.28). For example, the meaning of a word becomes clear when seen in the context of a sentence but, at the same time, the meaning of the sentence depends upon the meanings of the individual words and so there is a dynamic relationship between the two. In applying this to researchers analysing the experiences of people of particular phenomena the hermeneutic circle, or double hermeneutic, needs to be considered. Thus the double hermeneutic is the researcher trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world (Smith & Osborn, 2009).

This current study is rooted in a phenomenological theoretical perspective in that teaching assistants were seen as having a unique perspective on their relationships with the pupils with ASD that they were supporting. Their experiences as individuals in these relationships and expressions of their thoughts, feelings and perceptions allowed access to the meanings they gave those relationships. These perceptions regarding their inner life

world were seen as the primary psychological processes underpinning what they think, feel and do. At the same time the hermeneutic process needs to be considered in this study as the particular experiences related by the TAs of their relationships with the pupils with ASD were explored through the words they used and the meanings they gave their experiences. At the same time those meanings were interpreted in the context of my own experiences and so the double hermeneutic process also needed to be considered.

3.2.4 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) aims to explore in detail how participants make sense of their personal and social world. In particular, the main currency for an IPA study is the meanings particular experiences, events and states hold for participants (Smith & Osborn, 2009). IPA is based upon phenomenological psychology as it involves detailed examination of the participant's lived experience of a particular phenomenon and explores their personal perceptions and experiences rather than attempting to analyse independent variables that might impact upon the phenomenon in question. The approach is firmly rooted in a two-stage process of double hermeneutics i.e. that the researcher is making sense of the participants making sense of the particular phenomenon. Whilst IPA tries to understand what it is like from the participant's perspective it is also an approach where the researcher tries to make sense of the participant's perspective. There are two aspects of interpretation in an IPA study, that is, understanding in the sense of identifying or empathising with the participant's perspective and understanding as trying to make sense of the participant's perspective and both elements are important in order to provide a deep and rich analysis of the data (Smith & Osborn, 2009).

Idiography is also an important feature of IPA as this involves a focus on the particular and emphasising a detailed and in depth analysis of the participants' experiences of the phenomenon being explored. It is specific to particular individuals within particular contexts but holds that whilst individuals are linked to other people they have unique perspectives of particular phenomena.

I chose to use IPA in this study as I felt that an interpretative and idiographic understanding of individual perceptions was the most appropriate way to explore and understand teaching assistants' experiences of forming relationships with pupils with ASD who were in mainstream primary schools. Given the ontological and epistemological foundations of this research it was appropriate that the theoretical perspectives underpinning it were phenomenological. IPA is an approach that is firmly referenced in phenomenological psychology and in analysing data from participants who have a particular perception and understanding of a phenomenon, in this case TAs' perceptions of their relationships with pupils with ASD. IPA is also an appropriate method of analysis to use as I sought to gain a rich and detailed picture of the experiences TAs had of their relationships, the meanings they ascribed to them and the sense they made of them.

3.3. METHOD

3.3.1 Research questions

In qualitative studies research questions arise out of the ontological, epistemological and theoretical position adopted by the researcher. They narrow the focus of the research to specific questions to be answered and take two forms, namely, a central question and associated sub questions (Creswell, 2009). The central question is a broad question that

explores the main phenomenon in the study whilst sub questions narrow the focus of the study but leave open the questioning (ibid.).

The aim of this research and the choice of research questions reflected the ontological, epistemological and theoretical position I adopted within this study. The primary focus of the study was to explore the experiences TAs had of the relationships they developed with pupils who had ASD and who they supported in mainstream primary schools. The phenomenon under exploration was the relationships the TAs formed with the pupils and so the central question was developed to focus on that phenomenon. Two secondary sub questions were derived to narrow the focus of the central question and explore the phenomenon of the TA- pupil relationships further.

Central research question: What are TAs' experiences of forming relationships with the pupils who have ASD that they support in mainstream primary schools?

Research sub questions: What meanings do TAs attribute to these relationships?
What sense do TAs make of their relationships with these pupils?

3.3.2 Research context

This research was undertaken with teaching assistants from 3 mainstream primary schools located in a medium-sized town in a large County local authority. The primary schools were part of a cluster of 20 schools serving the community in and around the town and were mostly academy status schools or federations of church schools. I provide Educational Psychology services to the 20 schools in this particular cluster and so

participants were chosen from these schools as they were conveniently located for interviews to be undertaken.

The local authority in which the schools were located had 885 pupils who had Statements of Special Educational Needs or Education, Health and Care Plans where ASD was the main diagnostic category.

Primary schools were chosen as it was more usual for individual TAs to be allocated to work directly with pupils with ASD and so had the depth of interaction to produce rich data on their experiences of their relationships with pupils who have ASD.

3.3.3 Sample

Sampling was conducted following the guidelines for an IPA study set out by Smith et al (2009). A purposive sample of 6 Teaching Assistants was used as these were deemed the relevant participants to provide the particular experience of the phenomenon being researched, in this case the relationships between the TAs and the pupils with ASD. The TAs were all the designated 1:1 support for pupils with a primary diagnosis of autism or ASD in mainstream primary schools and who had Statements of Special Educational Needs where the primary diagnosis was noted. Therefore, the group of TAs represented a homogenous sample on the basis that they were able to provide the particular perspective on the experiences they had in forming relationships with pupils who have ASD. The sample came from three primary schools in the group of schools to which I provide Educational Psychology services. They were selected as the first 6 TAs who met the criteria for the study. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were as follows:

- Participants had to be teaching assistants in a mainstream primary school assigned to support a child who had an identified primary diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum

Disorder. The child had to have a Statement of Special Educational Needs or Education, Health and Care Plan where 1:1 support from a teaching assistant had been identified in the relevant part of the Statement or EHCP.

- TAs supporting pupils who did not have a primary diagnosis of ASD as set out in their Statement of Special Educational Needs or EHCP were excluded.
- TAs who were not the designated 1:1 support for the child with ASD were excluded.
- TAs of pupils with ASD but who did not have a Statement of Special Educational Needs or EHCP were excluded.
- TAs who supported children with ASD in secondary schools or special schools were excluded.
- The first 6 TAs who met the criteria were selected for the sample.

The sample size of 6 TAs was chosen as this fell within the accepted number of participants for an IPA study (Smith et al., 2009) and represented an acceptable number to be able to obtain rich and detailed data in respect of the research questions. A sample size smaller than 6 participants would not provide enough detail and data to adequately answer the research questions whilst a sample size greater than 6 participants would be significantly more difficult to manage in terms of transcription of data, analysis using IPA and constraints of time. The sample size also provided sufficient cases to be able to develop meaningful points of similarity and difference between participants but not so many that the amount of data generated was overwhelming.

Participants

The participants in the study were all female and their experience as TAs ranged from 6 months to 10 years. I chose not to ask about specific training in ASD or ask for any further information about the TAs as I felt that this might affect their interviews and how they might talk about their relationships. Each TA was given a participant information sheet (Appendix 4) and informed consent sheet (Appendix 5) and was asked to read and sign both prior to the interviews taking place. The participants were informed that their anonymity was assured so that their involvement in the study would remain private and confidential. Participants were also told that they would be invited to a feedback session where the findings from the study would be discussed with them. They were informed that this was voluntary to attend.

3.3.4 Data collection

Smith et al. (2009, p.56) note that 'IPA is best suited to a data collection approach which will invite participants to offer a rich, detailed, first person account of their experiences'. This study used a semi-structured interview format whereby each TA was interviewed using the semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix 6) as a guiding framework. The choice of semi-structured interviews allowed a degree of structure to the interview where identified issues could be explored and discussed. The qualitative interview is seen as 'a conversation with a purpose' (Smith et al, 2009 p.57) where specific topics are discussed but with the aim of allowing participants to tell their own stories in their own words (Smith et al, 2009). However, it also allows the researcher flexibility to pursue ideas and trains of thought expressed by the participants, which is in contrast to other approaches, such as using questionnaires or surveys, where there is less flexibility to explore themes

generated by the participants. The interview schedule is, in essence, a loose agenda allowing the researcher to frame questions in an open way but with the knowledge that things can and do change during the interview (Smith et al, 2009).

Each interview was planned to last between 45 minutes to one hour, which was deemed to be appropriate to gather the richness of data required but also not too long to make it unpleasant or tiring for the participants. This interview timeframe was within the accepted level for an IPA interview (Smith et al, 2009).

The interview schedule consisted of 3 open-ended questions linked to the research questions under exploration and was designed to encourage discussion of the relationships between the TAs and the pupils with ASD they were supporting. Prompts were included to encourage expansion of themes. However, it was also acknowledged that the interviews might proceed in particular directions and so the schedule was not seen as a strict set of questions to be followed at any cost. Consequently, the 3 questions were a broad framework used to start off the process of encouraging the TAs to articulate their experiences. Open-ended questions were used in order to encourage the participants to respond in detail and this allowed the interviews to proceed more naturally and helped develop richer and more genuine information.

The interviews with the 6 TAs were audiotaped and the TAs had been informed that this would be the case prior to the interviews taking place. Audiotaping was used so that a verbatim transcript could be produced to ensure that the exact words used by the TAs were available to be analysed. To ensure that rich data was collected each participant was encouraged to explore the relationships they had with the pupils they were supporting and were allowed to speak freely and reflectively and to develop their ideas, including their concerns, at length. Initially, participants were encouraged to tell me a little about the

work that they did with the child they were supporting before specifically focusing on the relationships that they had with the child. This enabled the TAs to relax and feel at ease before talking in detail about the specific relationships they had developed. Smith et al (2009) note the importance of establishing a rapport with the participant and making them feel at ease, as this is more likely to yield good data. I sought to ensure that I was comfortable with using the interview schedule prior to undertaking the interviews so that I did not have to refer directly to it during the interviews. This allowed the interview to be conducted more naturally. I was careful to highlight before the interviews that there were no right or wrong answers and that I was interested only in their experiences. I was conscious of seeking to ensure that the TAs had ample time to respond and that the interviews proceeded as a two-way conversation rather than the TAs feeling that they were being interviewed formally. The TAs had been informed prior to the interviews that they had the right to withdraw at any time.

The interviews took place in quiet rooms in the schools where the conversations could take place in private with no interruptions. After each interview had finished each TA was asked if there were any issues that arose for them during the interview to ensure that they had the opportunity to reflect on the conversation and raise any difficulties that had arisen for them. In particular, they were asked if there was anything during the interviews that they would like removed. Confidentiality and anonymity were also reiterated after the interviews had finished and that audio data would be destroyed once it had been transcribed.

I undertook one interview with a TA as a pilot interview and this was conducted one month prior to the interviews with the research study participants. This was with a TA who worked with a pupil with ASD in a different primary school from the ones where the research participants were based. The TA was identified through work that I had done in

the school on ASD training and she agreed to be interviewed when asked. She was informed that this was a pilot interview and would not be included in the research and that any data would be destroyed. The interview followed the schedule and pattern of the proposed research study interviews with the exception that the interview was not audiotaped and so the data was not transcribed or analysed. After the interview I discussed the format with the TA and reflected upon her comments about the questions I had asked. This helped me to shape my interview technique but no changes were required to the structure of the interview schedule or the questions based on her comments. From this pilot interview I judged that my style and approach to interviewing was in keeping with the IPA method. This interview was not included in this study.

3.3.5. Data analysis

IPA provides a systematic and structured approach to analysing data relating to people's experiences of the world. Smith et al (2009 p.43) note that choosing a method for data analysis is not so much a matter of choosing the tool for the job but 'a question of identifying what the job is'. There are various approaches for analysing qualitative data, such as narrative analysis, discourse analysis and thematic analysis, and each approach has a different idea of what data is, what might be inferred from it and what an analysis might seek to achieve (Smith et al, 2009). Indeed, the method of data analysis follows from the research questions posed, the ontological and epistemological position of the researcher and the key features of the methodology of the research. For example, where there is a focus in a study on how narrative or story relates to sense-making then a narrative analysis approach is likely to be best suited to analysing the data. Where the focus is on how people talk about a particular subject this might lead more readily to a

discourse analysis of data. IPA is best suited to research questions that look to focus on personal meaning and sense-making in a particular context and where participants share a particular experience of a phenomenon (Smith et al, 2009).

IPA was an appropriate data analysis approach to use in my research study as my research questions were focussed on the personal experiences of TAs in forming relationships with pupils with ASD and the sense they made of those relationships. Given that I was looking at the data from the TA interviews for language that described the meanings and sense they made of these relationships an IPA data analysis approach was an appropriate analytic approach to use.

There are a wide range of approaches within IPA from the descriptive to the interpretative and ‘from the particular to the shared’ (Smith et al, 2009 p. 79) and so I chose to follow the analytical process described by Smith et al (2009) as follows:

- Transcription of audio data verbatim (Appendix 10)
- Reading and re--reading the verbatim text from an interview.
- Making initial notes of areas of interest within the transcript particularly emphasising descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments (coding) (Appendix 10)
- Developing emergent themes (Appendix 8)
- Searching for connections across emergent themes to get sub-ordinate themes (Appendix 9)
- Searching for patterns across the 6 cases to identify the superordinate themes (Appendix 9)

Coding

In analysing the data following the procedures above a key element was in developing a structure for coding the data. I followed the principles in Smith et al (2009) whereby the language was analysed at three levels as follows:

- Descriptive comments that focussed on describing the content of what the TAs said. These were noted in normal text.
- Linguistic comments that focussed on exploring the specific use of language by the TAs. These were noted in italic text.
- Conceptual comments that focussed on interpretations of the language being used by the TAs. These were noted in underlined text.

This coding was entered into the right margin of the transcripts (Appendix 10).

Emergent, subordinate and superordinate themes

Emergent themes were developed from the coding of the individual TAs' language from the transcripts (Appendix 8). I then searched for connections and patterns across those themes using abstraction, polarisation and contextualisation (Smith et al, 2009) to gain the subordinate themes. These themes were then further abstracted across the six TA cases to identify superordinate themes (Appendix 9).

3.3.6. Researcher's position

An important consideration in an IPA study is the researcher's position and the personal experience they bring to the research. The double hermeneutic process contends that the researcher is in the position of making sense of the participants making sense of the phenomenon being studied (Smith & Osborn, 2009). Therefore, the role of the researcher

is twofold in that he or she is both like the participant in being a human and drawing on everyday experiences in order to make sense of the world but also unlike the participant as she/he only has access to the participant's experience through what the participant reports about it (Smith et al, 2009). In that respect the researcher brings his or her own experience into the interpretations he/she makes of the participants' experiences and this needs to be considered when undertaking an IPA study. Bracketing is a methodological device that requires the deliberate putting aside of the researcher's own belief about the phenomenon under investigation in order to accurately describe the participants' experiences of the phenomenon being studied. However, it is also noted that, whilst there is a need to bracket previous understandings, at the same time there is also a need to use them as a source of insight (Finlay, 2008). In that way the researcher will be distanced and detached but also open and fully involved (ibid.)

Therefore, the previous experience I brought to this research study was relevant in that I needed to consider how I would guard against my previous beliefs about the phenomenon being studied impinging on the research, whilst seeking to keep me open and involved. I have considerable experience of working with children who have ASD and teaching assistants who work with this group of pupils. As a teacher I have taught pupils with ASD and so understand some of the challenges that impact on forming relationships with them. As an Educational Psychologist I regularly work with teaching assistants in terms of providing advice and support in their work with pupils with ASD and also in relation to training. I recognise the demands placed upon TAs in their work with children who have ASD, as I have worked directly with this population of children and am able to reflect upon the particular challenges and rewards of work with them. The difficulties that children with ASD have in forming relationships with adults and their peers are well documented and I have personal, first-hand experience of these difficulties and also in

working with TAs in primary, secondary and special schools. However, whilst I came to the research with that set of experiences, and those experiences potentially influenced my interpretations of the TAs' experiences of their relationships with the pupils with ASD, it was important that I bracketed those experiences away during the interviews so that they didn't influence the ability of the TAs to give their experiences to me during the interviews.

3.4. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

3.4.1 Validity and reliability in Qualitative Studies

Validity and reliability do not have the same connotations in qualitative research as they do in quantitative research. Creswell (2009 p.190) noted that qualitative validity 'means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures' while qualitative reliability 'indicates that the researcher's approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects'.

Validity is often seen as a strength of qualitative research in referencing trustworthiness, authenticity and credibility, which check the accuracy of the research (Creswell, 2009).

Incorporating validity strategies into research helps to ensure the accuracy of the findings (ibid.)

Reliability procedures should also be an important part of research and should include procedures such as checking transcripts for errors and checking consistency of coding use (Creswell, 2009).

3.4.2 Validity and Reliability in IPA

Issues around validity and reliability are central when considering IPA research and, in particular, how the double hermeneutic process influences the findings. This can potentially lead to misinterpretation and uncertainty but IPA recognises that the research context is a dynamic one where the researcher plays a central role in the process (Smith & Osborn, 2009). Therefore, sensitivity to context and the development of rapport between the researcher and participant are crucial to establishing a valid IPA study. Data interpretation is subjective and so it is essential that interpretations in IPA studies are well-evidenced from the raw data (Smith et al, 2009).

Validity

Yardley (2008) sets out four principles for ensuring validity in IPA research as follows:

- Sensitivity to context
- Commitment and rigour
- Transparency and coherence
- Importance and Impact

Sensitivity to context

This principle relates to the researcher's sensitivity to the data, the social context and the relationship between the researcher and the participants. Consideration needs to be given to the nature of the researcher's involvement, the influence the researcher had on the participant's responses and the balance of power in the relationship.

Using IPA as a method of data analysis allows the researcher to be sensitive to context from an early stage in the research process through developing a close engagement with the idiographic and the particular (Smith et al, 2009). In this current study I selected a

purposive, homogenous sample of TAs as they had a shared experience of working directly with pupils with ASD and so were in a good position to talk about the relationships they had with those pupils. The detailed engagement I had with those participants, both during their interviews and through analysis of their transcripts, allowed me to be very aware of the particular situation each TA was in and to respond accordingly.

Sensitivity to context is also demonstrated in IPA research through the interactional nature of the data collection as ‘conducting a good interview requires skill, awareness and dedication’ (Smith et al, 2009 p.180). The level of detail in both the interview process and the collection of the data require the researcher to show empathy towards the participants, ensure that they are at ease and be aware of any difficulties that arise during the data collection process. Indeed, the negotiation of ‘the intricate power-play where research expert may meet experiential expert’ is an integral part of a well-constructed IPA study (Smith et al, 2009 p.180). In this current study I took considerable care to ensure that each TA was at ease by starting off the interviews gently by talking in general about how they supported the pupil in school. This included asking them about the child both in the class and at playtimes. These type of questions were ones that TAs are usually familiar with and so allowed them to talk about the children in terms they were comfortable with before we explored the relationship they had with those pupils. The fact that I spent time with the TAs before the interview telling them about the process and what was going to happen, as well as reassuring them that there were no right or wrong answers to my questions, also helped them to feel more relaxed and open to talking about the pupils.

Sensitivity to context is also evident through the data analysis process, as the researcher has to pay detailed attention to each participant’s account in order to ensure that he or she is able to make sense of his or her experiences (Smith et al, 2009). In this current study I

immersed myself in the transcripts from the TA interviews and read and re-read them on numerous occasions. The process of developing emergent themes, subordinate and superordinate themes required numerous readings of the transcripts and attention to detail to the words the TAs used. A constant checking and re-checking of the data ensured that I was sensitive to each TA's personal experience such that the analysis of each TA's data was related to that TA as an individual.

Commitment and Rigour

Commitment relates to the degree of attentiveness to the participant and the data and the care taken during analysis. Rigour refers to the thoroughness of the study.

Commitment is demonstrated in an IPA study through the degree of attention given to the participant during the data collection and the care with which the data analysis is undertaken (Smith et al, 2009). I demonstrated commitment to the participants in this current study through the investment of time and effort in ensuring that they were comfortable, that I paid attention to their experiences and that the interviews were carried out in depth to explore the varying aspects of the TAs' relationships with the pupils. In relation to the data analysis I ensured that the data was transcribed verbatim and that the analysis was undertaken in detail through reading and re-reading the transcripts on numerous occasions and paying close attention to the words the TAs used.

Rigour is evident in IPA studies through ensuring that the sample of participants is appropriate to the research questions being posed, the quality of the interviews is maintained and that there is detail and depth in the analysis of the data (Smith et al, 2009). In this current study I chose a purposive and homogenous sample of TAs who met specific inclusion and exclusion criteria for participants in the study. This ensured that the TAs selected and interviewed were appropriately placed to give rich and detailed

information about their experiences of forming relationships with pupils with ASD in mainstream primary schools. The Interviews were conducted following the principles set out by Smith et al (2009) to ensure that this current IPA study was conducted in line with established and recognised IPA research studies. This included developing and following a semi-structured interview format, ensuring that the TAs felt at ease during the interviews and that the interviews were conducted in order to help the TAs articulate their experiences of the relationships they had with the pupils with ASD in detail. The analysis of the transcript data also followed the principles set out by Smith et al (2009) in coding the language being used and in the development of the emergent, subordinate and superordinate themes. This ensured consistency of approach in this study compared with the guiding principles set out for IPA studies.

Transparency and Coherence

Transparency refers to how clearly the stages of the research are described and includes reference to participant selection, interview schedule construction, how the interview was conducted and the steps used in the data analysis (Smith et al, 2009). In this current study I ensured that these steps were detailed in the write-up of the study so that the sample selection was clearly evident and the inclusion/exclusion criteria identified. The interview schedule (Appendix 6) was described and the interview questions detailed so that the format I used in the interviews was clear to see. The steps used in the data analysis were detailed and referenced to the principles outlined by Smith et al (2009).

Coherency relates to ensuring that the research presents a coherent argument where the themes follow together logically and where ambiguities and contradictions are addressed clearly (Smith et al, 2009). Coherence also refers to how well the research fits with theoretical assumptions of the approach being implemented (Yardley, 2008). In that

regard an IPA study should be consistent with the phenomenological theoretical perspective and hermeneutics (Smith et al, 2009). In this current study the use of IPA clearly followed from the ontological, epistemological and theoretical position I adopted and have articulated. I focused on the idiographic and particular experiences of individual TAs of forming relationships with pupils with ASD and then sought to explore the meanings they ascribed to those experiences and the sense they made of them. I then sought to make sense of their experiences though reflecting on my own position in the research, through bracketing my own experience and through understanding my relationship to the TAs, their experiences and the data produced from their interviews.

Importance and Impact

Importance and impact relate to how whether the study produces something that is interesting, important or useful (Yardley, 2008). In this current study I explored the relationships between TAs and their relationships with pupils with ASD in order to add to the existing limited research on relationships between TAs / teachers and pupils with ASD but also to provide a rich account of TAs' personal experiences and to make sense of the meanings they give those relationships. The relevance and importance to TAs, schools and Educational Psychologists were discussed within the study.

Audit Trail

In ensuring validity in IPA research an audit trail provides a chain of evidence, which can be followed so that it is clear how the research progressed from the initial research questions through to the final report (Smith et al, 2009). In this current study the audit trail through each stage of the research process was as follows:

1. The Research Protocol set out my initial ideas on the research topic and how I would go about conducting my research (Appendix 7).
2. The literature review questions and search terms of the literature review established the existing literature in the area of the study (Appendix 1).
3. The research questions were evidenced through the conceptual framework and literature review questions.
4. The data was collected through interviews being audiotaped (destroyed after transcription) and the tapes transcribed verbatim (Appendix 10).
5. The data was analysed through development of emergent themes (Appendix 8) and subordinate and superordinate themes (Appendix 9).
6. The research study was written up and a final report produced (Thesis report)

Reliability

Reliability ensures that the researcher's approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects (Creswell, 2009). In this current study I followed the principles in conducting an IPA study in Smith et al (2009) in relation to three areas:

1. By ensuring that the ontological, epistemological and theoretical positions I took were consistent with an IPA study. Using IPA was consistent with the relativist ontological position, constructivist epistemological stance and phenomenological theoretical perspective I took in this research study.
2. By ensuring that I followed the coding principles by coding descriptive comments, linguistic comments and conceptual comments clearly in the transcripts (Appendix 10)
3. By ensuring that the research considered and accounted for the double hermeneutic process and that I reflected upon this in the research.

In considering these three areas in my research I sought to ensure that the IPA study that I conducted was consistent with other appropriately conducted IPA studies.

3.5. ETHICS

Researchers need to consider ethical issues when planning and conducting research studies as they need ‘to protect their research participants; develop a trust with them; promote the integrity of research; guard against misconduct and impropriety that might reflect on their organisations or institutions; and cope with new, challenging problems’ (Creswell, 2009 p.87). Educational Psychologists are guided on ethical issues by various codes of practice with the British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct (2009) and the Health Care Professions Councils (HCPC) Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (2016) being the two that I complied with during this current study. These codes emphasise that practitioners need to act with respect, competence, responsibility, honesty and integrity in their work and this applies as much to research as it does to their professional responsibilities.

This study underwent ethical consideration (Appendix 2) and received ethical approval from the Tavistock and Portman Trust (Appendix 3) for me to conduct research exploring teaching assistants’ relationships with pupils with ASD in mainstream primary schools. The study required careful planning, consideration and implementation in order to comply with ethical guidelines. In particular, the ethical issues in this study related to informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, reducing participant stress and harm and the right to withdraw. Furthermore, ethical issues arise in the research problem, in the purpose and questions, in data collection, analysis and interpretation and in writing and disseminating the research (Creswell, 2009).

The ethical issues were addressed as follows:

- The headteachers of each school were consulted prior to the research study being undertaken to ensure that they consented to the TAs being interviewed. They were also told that the information contained in the research would be anonymous and would respect their confidentiality.
- Informed consent was obtained from each participant after they had read and signed a participant information sheet (Appendix 4) and participant consent form (Appendix 5).
- Participants were informed that their participation in the study was confidential and that they would remain anonymous. Participants' names were changed and the pupils with whom they worked were identified with letters, which did not relate to their names. Any possible reference to the school, town or area in which they worked was removed so that it was not possible to identify the TAs, the children they worked with or the schools they worked in.
- The interviews were conducted in order to reduce stress or harm for the TAs to the lowest level possible within the context. Time was taken to explain the interview process and to put the TAs at ease before and during the interviews. The interviews started with factual questions about how they supported the child to help relax them. The TAs were informed that if they felt stressed or upset that they could stop the interview at any time. I also explained to them that I would be available after the interviews to discuss any issues that they felt had arisen during the interviews.
- The TAs were informed that they could withdraw from the interviews at any time and for any reason. They were also informed that they could ask for either certain information or the entire interview to be deleted.

- The TAs were informed that the interviews would be audiotaped and that these tapes would be destroyed after they had been transcribed.
- In respect of the data information the TAs were assured that during the transcription process the tapes would be stored in a secure place until they were destroyed. The transcripts of their interviews would be anonymous.
- Interviews were conducted in a quiet room in the schools and were chosen to respect the TAs' privacy and confidentiality. The TAs were informed that if they were concerned about their privacy or confidentiality that an alternative room would be found.
- The TAs were informed that they would be invited to a feedback session where the findings of the research would be discussed with them and that they would receive a copy of the research if they wanted to have one.

3.6. REFLEXIVITY

Central to any IPA study are the researcher's reflections upon both the sense the participants make of their experiences and the sense the researcher makes of the participants' interpretations of their experiences. This double hermeneutic process is one that needed to be considered within the methodology as this formed an essential part of the iterative process of data collection, analysis and reflection (Smith et al, 2009).

Consideration of bracketing, that is the setting aside of prior knowledge and experiences relevant to the research study, should be balanced by an understanding of the importance of self-reflection and an awareness of what the researcher brings to the research study.

Whilst it is important for the researcher to ensure that the relationship between him or her

and the participants is balanced to encourage an open description of the experiences, it is also important that the researcher understands how his or her prior experience might influence the interpretations he or she makes from the data.

I built reflexivity into this research study at three levels:

1. Through ongoing supervision where the progress of the research was discussed with my supervisor and I was then able to reflect upon her comments.
2. Through discussions with the doctoral course members and tutors both in group meetings and through a formal presentation of the status of my research.
3. Through immersing myself in the transcript data and reflecting continually on the data throughout the analysis and thesis write-up.

Reflective supervision allowed me the opportunity to present my findings over multiple time points and get ongoing feedback on that data, particularly in relation to the analysis of the data through coding. This particularly helped me to be consistent in my application of the coding to the data so that the analysis was valid. This then provided the foundation for developing the themes from the data.

Reflective discussions with course members through group feedback and formal presentation of the progress of my research on two occasions enabled me to demonstrate the coding of the transcripts and get feedback on this. This allowed me to reflect on the coding and analysis to ensure that it was being consistently applied to the data and that the themes that emerged were also clearly referenced from the data from the TAs. This helped to prevent misinterpretations of the data and to ensure that my application of the coding was consistent.

In this study I have ensured that my prior knowledge and expertise in relation to children and young people with ASD did not influence the interview process and collection of data

from the TAs. However, I also understood that this personal experience and knowledge was an important part of the interpretative process and have referenced them in this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION TO FINDINGS

In this chapter I will present the emergent, subordinate and superordinate themes that were elicited during the analysis of the teaching assistants' experiences of the relationships they had with the pupils with ASD that they were supporting. This chapter is, according to Smith et al (2009 p. 108), 'by far the most important section in an IPA write-up'. It is important to present a full narrative account, which 'is comprehensible, systematic and persuasive' and so this section is, therefore, 'much more substantial, and much more discursive, than the results section of a typical quantitative report' (Smith et al, 2009 p. 109).

This chapter is in two sections. The first section looks at key findings in relation to the individual TAs, which was the first level of analysis for themes. This sought to ensure that the data relating to each TA was clearly represented and available to the reader. The second section looks at interpretations of the superordinate themes across the TAs, which was the second level of analysis where themes were connected across the TAs' interview data. This sought to ensure that the data relating to the superordinate themes was clearly represented and available to the reader.

The themes were identified through their frequency of occurrence in the transcripts and analysis of the language being used by the TAs (Appendix 8) Additionally, themes were also identified when TAs showed a particularly interesting and unique insight into the relationship they had with the pupil they were supporting. Initially, 28 emergent themes were identified (Appendix 8) and these were abstracted into the 15 subordinate themes

noted below. These subordinate themes were then further abstracted into the 4 superordinate themes noted in Table 3.

Table 3: Superordinate and Subordinate themes

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Attachment	Trust Bond between the child and TA Special or unique nature of the relationship Challenges in the relationship Detachment
TA position	Mediator Teacher Parent
Child's Difficulties	Communicating and understanding feelings and emotions Social interaction Behaviour
Personal and Professional Satisfaction	Feelings around the child's achievements and progress Feelings around the child making emotional connections Feelings around the TA's ability and experience Feelings around support and training

Further details of emergent themes and the annotated interview transcripts are detailed in Appendices 8 and 10. Pseudonyms have been used for each TAs' in order to provide anonymity and letters were used to denote the child they were supporting (Appendix 10).

4.2. OVERVIEW OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS' EXPERIENCES

In this section I look at the key findings relating to each teaching assistant referenced to the subordinate and superordinate themes.

4.2.1 Anna

Key findings

Anna expressed ideas of attachment throughout her interview, with references to trust, safety, empathy and the special nature of the relationship. The trust in her relationship with A was evident when she noted, "he would trust me with any situation that he is in" (A114) and the special relationship was articulated when she said, "nobody else understands" (A155). She noted ideas around safety in her relationship with A when she said, "I think that was a big, important thing for A to know he was safe" (A107) and noted empathy when she said, "yes, well there was a lot of empathy I obviously felt for A" (A186).

Anna expressed ideas relating to positions of being mediator, teacher and parent during her interviews. She articulated the mediator position when she was there to assist A to achieve his goals as she noted, "I feel the need to try and find a solution to help A with those needs" (A444) whereas she expressed her position as teacher when she was there to teach A specific skills. As she noted, "for A, that almost had to be taught those emotions" (A511). Anna articulated her position as a parent when she asked, "is it a motherly

instinct” (A435) and then went on to note, “I just feel very protective towards him” (A436) and “it is that protection thing, it is wanting to protect and you know no harm come to him” (A459).

Anna talked about A’s difficulties with communication, social interaction, anxiety, emotional connection and behaviour. His emotional difficulties were expressed when she noted, “it is far more difficult for him to understand and grasp the emotions of things” (A483). She also discussed his anxiety and the impact of medication on this such that when off the medication his anxiety was reduced. Socially, she noted that A had friendship difficulties and that, for A, “more often than not it is friendship issues” (A479). In relation to his behaviour she noted, “he would become quite hyper in the afternoon, people found that quite difficult to deal with” (A268).

In relation to her satisfaction in the relationship, Anna expressed feelings of her pride in both A’s progress and in his connection to her emotionally. Her feelings of reward and satisfaction were expressed when she noted, “he often tells me, I cannot do this without you” (A369) and that “I just want A to be happy, I just want him to have a happy life” (A447). She also noted that the relationship “means an awful lot to me. I feel that I can help A in any way then I have achieved my goal” (A384). Anna did not express any feelings of frustration either in A’s progress or his ability to connect with her and this, again, emphasised the generally positive and secure relationship she had with A. Indeed, she saw her relationship with him as contributing to A having, “as normal life as he possibly can and be accepted and feel he is part of his community” (A388).

4.2.2. Beth

Key findings

Beth expressed ideas of attachment in her relationship with B through trust, safety, empathy and the special nature of their relationship. She noted, “he just needs somebody that will...that he can rely on” (B221). Beth described the nature of their relationship through the specific use of the word ‘attachment’ and that “he has formed quite an attachment to me” (B89) and that, “I get very attached” (B423). Beth also talked about challenges and difficulties in their relationship when she noted that B often didn’t want to do things and “I think that has been quite challenging, is to get him to respond when you need to” (B260). Beth noted detachment in her relationship with B when she said, “I am aware that too much attachment....to try and get him to be a little more independent” (B331).

In relation to TA position, Beth articulated ideas that, primarily, reflected her role as mediator. She saw her position as being to help B and noted “my role is to assist B on a day-to-day basis” (B3). She articulated the position as teacher less frequently but did take this on when she encouraged B to speak and use his words when she noted, “I would have to say to him, you use your words, use your words to tell me” (B319). She more readily described herself as a parent and in a nurturing role when she noted, “He just, he needs somebody just to be caring and understand” (B219).

Beth noted B’s difficulties throughout her interview, particularly in relation to his social communication and concentration difficulties. She noted, “B has problems socialising” (B62) and that “when he forms an attachment to somebody, particularly friendships, I have noticed he gets very anxious about those people” (B538). She noted his concentration difficulties when she said, “he finds it extremely difficult to focus” (B247).

In relation to personal satisfaction, Beth expressed pride in B's progress and emotional connection but also articulated frustrations in these areas. Her pride came from seeing B achieve and progress and she noted, "I want him to do so well" (B189) and when B connected with her emotionally through smiling at her she felt rewarded by this by feeling "really, really good, really good" (B416) However, Beth also expressed frustrations with B's progress and in his difficulties with connecting emotionally to her. She noted, "I think at times it is easy to get frustrated, from my point of view, I think because you know he can do, if he focussed, he could do so much better" (B172).

4.2.3. Clare

Key findings

Clare articulated little by way of positive expressions about her attachment to C and tended to talk more about her detachment from C rather than her attachment to him. For example, she talked about detachment from the relationship when she noted, "I am not very fond of him" (C181) and "he would far rather be playing with beans" (C227). Clare focussed on the difficulties within the relationship when she noted the battle with C in getting him to do things and that, "it can be quite challenging and he can be quite physical" (C90). Furthermore, whilst Clare did state, "we do have a good relationship" (C51) and that she enjoyed her time with C, she struggled to articulate this in the interview. Indeed, she noted that the rewards within the relationship were few and far between and she summed this up when she noted there was "a light bulb moment when he does respond which is quiet rewarding when he does, but to be honest it is quite short lived, those sort of times" (C268).

In relation to TA position, Clare described herself in relation to her being a mediator, and it was interesting to note that she saw herself as very much in the shadow of the teacher

and that “he knows that the teacher is where the buck stops” (C52) with her role being to “break the work down into chunks that he can deal with and use for his own learning” (C154).

In relation to the child’s difficulties Clare noted her difficulties connecting emotionally to C when she stated, “I think the most difficult thing is to know that he is not into what you are trying to do with him at all” (C207) and then concluded that, because of his particular difficulties, “we feel that we cannot fulfil those needs” (C334). She also noted his sensory needs when she said, “he also likes to put things in his mouth a lot” (C22) and “well the big thing with this child is his sensory needs” (C299).

In relation to personal and professional satisfaction Clare tended to express frustration in her relationship with C more than pride or reward, although there were a few occasions when she did feel pride in C’s progress or emotional connection with her. She noted that she had enjoyed her time with C and talked particularly about “you know a light bulb moment when he does respond which is quite rewarding when he does” (C268) but she also noted significant frustrations in her relationship with C. For example, she noted “very, very small amounts of progressions, so I think that is frustrating for me and for him” (C214) and that “sometimes it feels like there is very little progression” (C219).

4.2.4. Dena

Key findings

Dena expressed her feelings about attachment primarily as D trusting her and having trust in the relationship. She noted, “so it is things like trust” (D413) and also noted that the relationship developed over time when she said, “we sort of built one” (D408) and that it took time before she felt that he trusted her when he would “ask for help with certain

things which he would not have done before” (D257). She also noted, “I think he does trust when I say this is what I think is the best” (D337).

In relation to TA position, Dena articulated this primarily as a mediator but did also describe her position as teacher on two occasions. Dena described her position as mediator when she helped D deal with his anxiety about getting his pen licence. This was evident when she noted, “I have to sort of step in and help him” (D20) and “I would like to think he thought I was quite helpful”(D313). Dena also described her position as teacher when she noted her investment in “their development, their skills, their progress” (D449).

In relation to the child’s difficulties Dena raised D’s difficulties as being mostly with anxiety and in connecting emotionally. In relation to getting his pen licence Dena noted how worried he was and that “it took a long time to get him to tell me what the actual reason was” (D146). She also noted, “he has sort of got a black and white view of seeing something” (D119).

In relation to her own satisfaction in the relationship, Dena expressed positive feelings about the rewards in her relationship with D on numerous occasions during her interview. She showed pride in his progress and also in his emotional connection with her when she noted that he opened up to her and that this was “quite a breakthrough” (D168).

4.2.5. Emma

Key findings

In relation to attachment, Emma focussed on descriptions around detachment in her relationship with E but did note some feelings around the special nature of their relationship and trust. In relation to detachment she noted that E didn’t engage with her and that “I am not getting much back from her in that” (E70). Later in the interview she

noted, “she does not give a lot back” (E97). At the same time Emma expressed her own feelings of detachment when she noted, “I am trying to not make it as such an intense relationship” (E226). Emma did see elements of the special nature of their relationship when she noted that, whilst E had hit out at other people, “she has never been cross with me “ (E117) and that with Emma, E is “totally different to how she has been” (E135). Emma expressed trust in the relationship when she noted, “just as long as she knows I am there for her” (E154).

Emma articulated her TA position as a mediator when she helped E to make a mask and supported a social interaction between E and another pupil “whereas normally she would not allow that” (E163). Emma also took on the position of teacher by assuming a strict approach with E when she noted that “I am quite strict with her as well and I think she responds to that quite well” (E58). Emma also noted, “I have helped her a great deal in the last six months just by being strict with her” (E83).

Emma discussed E’s difficulties, particularly her communication issues, when she noted, “she doesn’t understand a great deal” (E9) and “she could hardly talk at all when I first started” (E82). However, she noted progress with E’s communication when she said, “she responds to most things that I ask her to do now” (E92).

In relation to her satisfaction in the relationship, Emma described her pride in E’s progress and in the connection emotionally with her. She said, “it makes me happy when she does things that I never thought she would be capable of” (E188) and that “I think I have helped her a great deal in the last six months”(E83) Emma did not express feelings of frustration in E’s progress or difficulties with emotional connection.

4.2.6. Frances

Key findings

In relation to attachment, Frances focussed primarily on detachment and conflict and offered little by way of positive language about trust or the special nature of the relationship. She described her feelings of detachment in the relationship strongly when she noted, “you are working with somebody facing the wall” (F435) and that “you do not know how he feels about a particular...” (F83). Frances expressed feelings around hardship in their relationship when she noted, “I have struggled with it to be honest” (F350) and that “it is quite taking, he is taking from you” (E351).

In relation to TA position, Frances expressed ideas primarily around being a mediator, which was illustrated when she noted she did things such as scribing for him in class and that “you are the thing that makes them get from A to B, gets them to do the work they need to do, helps them emotionally, educationally, in everything” (F339). She also described the position of teacher on one occasion when she noted she had been working with him on clockwork “and then he has read for 10 minutes and then a bit of comprehension” (F207).

Frances noted F’s difficulties with communication, social interaction and with behaviour and noted, “he is not very socially able” (F52) and that “he finds it very difficult to make friends” (F58). She noted also that “it is very difficult working with a child like this” (F95), which implied that she felt it was his difficulties that impacted upon the relationship.

In relation to her satisfaction within the relationship, Frances expressed numerous feelings of frustration mostly at F’s lack of emotional connection with her and her difficulties with the relationship. She noted, “I have struggled with it to be honest” (F350)

and that “with autistic children they do not ask you how your weekend is or whatever” (F353). She also expressed frustration at a lack of support in the school and by her own lack of experience. She noted that “the whole situation is very difficult” and that the teacher was leaving having “washed her hands of every bit” (F228). Indeed, Frances concluded with “he needs someone with much more experience” (F271) and that the relationship with F had impacted upon her significantly and negatively when she noted, “my relationship at home has suffered” (F296).

4.3 SUPERORDINATE THEMES

In this section I will look at the superordinate themes as they applied across the TA data.

4.3.1. Attachment

The superordinate theme of attachment described the bond between the TAs and the child they were supporting. The emergent themes under this superordinate theme were trust, the nature of the bond between the TA and child, the special or unique nature of the relationship, challenges in the relationship and detachment.

Trust

In their interviews the TAs talked about their relationship in varying ways. One significant emergent theme was that of trust and many of the TAs talked about trust in their relationship. Trust came up in different forms. Firstly, there were descriptions of trust the child had in the TA; secondly, there was the mutual trust the child and TA had in the relationship and thirdly, there was the idea of safety and security in the relationship. Two of the TAs didn’t raise trust as an important feature of their relationships.

When the TAs talked about trust the child had in them they articulated this idea in a number of ways. For example, when Anna noted that, “my relationship with A is built solely on trust” (A100) and she went on to say that this was something that was built over time “to the point where he would trust me with any situation that he is in” (A113). To her trust was also a reciprocal phenomenon and that, “we built a real good trust together” (A105). Once this trust had been established with A, she noted, “he trusted me enough to tell me how he was feeling” (A193). Beth noted a similar feeling of trust in the relationship when she noted that “I think our relationship has got to the point where it has developed enough for him to be able to tell me things” (B114) and that “I think he has just developed that kind of need for me” (B94).

For Dena, trust was something that she articulated throughout her interview. In one example she talked about how she developed her relationship at the beginning by letting D tell her about what he was doing so that “we sort of... started at that point, building a relationship, so he was sort of guiding me through things” (D63). However, as their relationship developed she described a pivotal moment when D was anxious about going up to receive his pen licence for handwriting. She noted that “he did start coming up and saying: "oh, actually, I'm a bit nervous about this and I'm a bit nervous about that". So hopefully that means it is a bit more comfortable to say things he is worried about, now” (D95). The trust that was developing between Dena and D was further articulated when Dena said, “so it is trusting that, you know, maybe someone else might have another view” (D132).

For Frances, she reflected the difficulties in her relationship with F when she said, “our relationship is struggling at the moment” (F196) and she attributed this in large part to external factors such as the teacher leaving and her feelings of not being experienced enough for him or being supported in school. However, despite the difficulties she

expressed in the relationship with F she did note that “I think...he trusts me” (F377) even though she then went on to note the difficulties that were in their relationship.

In Emma’s case, she felt that trust was about being there for E and she articulated this when she said, “just as long as she knows I am there for her I think that helps a great deal” (E154). However, Emma expressed the idea of becoming too close to E when she noted, “I do not want her to rely on me too much” (E206) and that “I do not want it to be a too intense relationship” (E203).

The idea of mutual trust in the relationship, was expressed by Anna when she said, “so we have a good trusting relationship” (A125). For example, when she said “even though I was not working with him we still had this very very good relationship that he was able to tell me what was going on and how he was feeling” (A172) reflected the trust that had developed between them. Beth articulated a similar theme when she noted, “I think our relationship has got to the point where it has developed enough for him to be able to tell me things” (B114). Indeed, she went further by saying that “when he is finding the world extremely tricky, he just needs somebody that will...that he can rely on” (B220).

Dena expressed the idea of mutual trust when she described how, at first, “it was me very much going up to him checking if he was alright” (D250) but that later she didn’t feel the need to do this as D “would ask, put his hand up and ask for help with certain things, which he would not have done before” (D256).

In relation to the emergent theme of safety and security in the relationship this was expressed by Beth when she said, “he knows what he is doing and he feels happy and safe” (B388) whilst Anna noted that “I wanted him to know that he was safe and I think that was a big, important thing for A to know he was safe” (A106).

For Clare, the theme of trust was not one that she articulated in her interview. Whilst she did note, “I would say that we have got a good relationship” (C34) she tended to focus more on the difficulties in the relationship with C. Indeed, she struggled to connect with him and establish a bond, illustrated when she said, “I am not very fond of him” (C181) and that “I know that he is going to continue to struggle probably more and more the further up the school he gets” (C182).

The nature of the TA-pupil bond

Another aspect of attachment in the relationships was indicated in the way that the TAs spoke of the bond between them and child. The emergent themes of togetherness, empathy, building a relationship and teamwork were ones that were evident in descriptions of the relationships the TAs had with the children they were supporting. Beth noted the closeness she had with B when she talked about using non-verbal communication and that there was “the attachment I suppose, he has learnt...he looks for me sometimes when he does not know what is going on” (B328). She qualified this later when she said, “I think sometimes he forms an attachment because he is familiar and the familiarisation perhaps is key” (B360).

The idea of building up the relationship was one that three of the TAs raised. Anna noted that “we have built up a very, very good relationship” (A112) whilst Dena noted that “we sort of...started at that point, building a relationship” (D63) and later that “it is very important to me that we sort of built one, not necessarily rushing it to be quite quick” (D407). The idea that a relationship was one that evolved over time and was built was also expressed by Frances when she noted, “I was really proud of him, you build up a massive relationship with the children, they are not your own, but you are responsible for them” (F334).

The emergent theme of togetherness and teamwork was also one that TAs used to describe the bond they had in their relationship. Anna noted that she was proud of A “that he had come that far in the years we have been together” (A201) and that “we have always got through it, we have always got through it” (A225), emphasising that it had been a journey together through both good and difficult times. Beth also noted the idea of togetherness through difficult times when she said, “I always say to him, I am here to help you, we can do this together” (B281). Dena noted, in her example of D going up to get his pen licence, that “we sort of talked him through – we are just going to take it up, it will be fine” (D88) and that this togetherness helped D overcome his anxiety. Emma expressed the idea of teamwork and togetherness when she gave an example of when a boy came over to E and asked to help her with making a mask “whereas normally she would not allow that but I kind of asked her and she was yeah...well she didn’t say yeah but told her that was what was happening and she was fine with it” (E163). Emma went further in the idea of togetherness when she extended this to other adults when she stated, “I think we need more...well not more support but just every adult on board” (E177) and that working together produced a better outcome for E. Frances, however, did not talk about togetherness as her relationship with F was more problematic. For example, she described F as being “quite bright and so he can do any of the work that I am given for him to do” (F18) but that he often refused to engage. Indeed, Frances questioned F’s ability to engage when she noted “It is odd, you do not know how he feels about a particular.. I have no idea. Whether he is indifferent” (F83) and her relationship with him appeared to be very much one-way in that he controlled the interactions. Therefore, for Frances it appeared to be difficult for her to establish that connection that could then develop into working together in the relationship.

Empathy was something that Anna expressed when she said, “yes, well there was a lot of empathy I obviously felt for A” (A186) and this manifested itself in her wanting to reassure him, particularly in relation to his grandfather’s illness. Dena expressed empathy as well when she talked about D’s anxiety about getting his pen licence and she noted, “I was trying to talk to him about, you know, he is good enough, you got to go up” (D153).

Clare, on the other hand, found it difficult to express empathy for C as she struggled to relate to him. She often used language that distanced herself from him emotionally such as “I mean really with a child like him” (C139) and “he does not engage at all with what you are doing” (C142) such that she expressed difficulties with connecting to him. Emma also noted that E “does not give a lot back” (E97) but she did show empathy for her when she said, “just as long as she knows I am there for her” (E154) and her description of the time when a boy came over to E and wanted to help her make a mask (E160) also showed empathy for E.

Special or unique nature of the relationship

This subordinate theme was evident in four of the TAs’ interviews. When Anna noted that she was called in to work with A when he was having a difficult time over his grandfather’s illness she described a special type of relationship that was almost unique to them with her being the one who was able to reach out to A at a difficult time. As she noted, “he immediately opened up to me and told me what the problems were” (A147) and that ‘he had not spoken to anybody else about that’ (A150). Beth noted in her interview that “I know what works and what does not work for him” (B215) whilst Dena said, “it’s knowing I can trust, if I ask him to do something because we have got that relationship. I know him” (D415). Emma gave a good example of their unique relationship when she noted that “I mean, maybe just even my voice might be kind of

calming to her” (E145). However, for Frances there wasn’t that sense of the special or unique nature of their relationship as she found it hard to connect with F and develop that quality of relationship. When she said, “I do not know if he cares at all” (F380) and that it is “very difficult to be emotionally attached to this particular child” (F386) there was a strong sense of Frances’s frustrations in the relationship with F. This was a similar story for Clare as she articulated the difficulties with the relationship very easily but she didn’t express the special or unique relationship with C even when there was “a light bulb moment when he does respond which is quite rewarding when he does, but to be honest it is quite short-lived, those sort of times” (C268).

Challenges in the relationship

The subordinate theme of challenge in the relationships was evident in five of the TAs’ interviews. Indeed, for two of the TAs this was one of the most dominant themes that emerged from their interviews. Anna’s relationship with A was largely a positive one but she also noted the challenges that resulted in her work with him. For example, she noted that “there have certainly been challenging times, there is no doubt about that” (A226) but she emphasised that this was to be expected for a child with ASD and complex needs. Beth also noted difficulties in her relationship with B when she noted, “I think that has been quite challenging, is to get him to respond when you need to” (B260) and revealed how hard it could be getting B to engage with her. For Clare her relationship with C was difficult and this was evident throughout her interview. For example, she noted, “there are definitely times when it is quite tough and you just think “oh my goodness I do not think I am doing the right thing for him”” (C261). She also noted that difficulties in their relationship were caused by external factors such as C’s sensory needs (C300) and the school not having the correct equipment for him (C318). Dena expressed the idea of challenge in the development of her relationship with D when she noted that “so you feel

you do have to work because a lot of things do not work when you are trying to help them if you do not have the relationship there” (D293). For her the challenge in the relationship had been very much the investment of a lot of hard work over time. Emma felt that her control of the relationship through being strict was the answer to challenges in their relationship. For example, she noted that E “has hit other people but she has never hit me” which she attributed to “I do not know whether it is the different style of...like I say I am quite strict” (E116).

However, for Frances her relationship with F was very challenging and this came across throughout the interview with her. For example, she stated, “I have struggled with it to be honest. It is quite taking, he is taking from you, you do not get much back really” (F350).

Detachment

The theme of detachment was evident in all the TAs’ interviews. For Anna this was encapsulated in her concern that A became as independent as possible and that getting too close was perhaps detrimental to A. She explained that “sometimes I think we can be a bit too close, and then I have to stand back and I have to rethink what is going on” (A210). Indeed, she emphasised this powerfully when she said, “I want for A to cope without me at the end of the day” (A393). Clare, however, struggled to relate to C and detachment in their relationship was reflected in the language she used to talk about C. For example, she noted, “I am not very fond of him” (C181) and this impacted on their relationship to the extent that she felt that “he is not into what you are trying to do with him at all” (C208). Detachment was also evident in Frances’s interview when she used detached language to talk about F. For example, she used the phrase “a child like him” (F176) and “with autistic children” (F353) rather than using his name, which depersonalised the relationship. Emma expressed the idea of detachment in her relationship with E as being

“because she does not give a lot back” (E97). She further noted, “I obviously don’t want her to become too attached to me” (E199) and “I don’t want it to be a too intense relationship” (E204).

4.3.2. Teaching Assistants’ position in the relationship

The superordinate theme of the position the teaching assistants took in their relationship with the children they were supporting was one that emerged from all of the TA interviews. In my analysis of their language I felt that there were three main positions that TAs took when talking about their relationships, namely as a mediator, as teacher and as parent.

TA position as mediator

This role was characterised by language the TAs used around being mediators, helpers and guides between the child and other adults and children. Anna saw herself as a helper when she said, “I feel that I can help A in any way then I have achieved my goal” (A384) and that “I want for A to cope without me at the end of the day” (A393). She also saw herself as a guide for A when she noted, “I think he always feels that I will help him find the answers that he needs” (A342). Beth positioned herself as a mediator when she noted, “I think he understands that I can break the work down for him” (B275) but she also saw herself as a helper when she said, “I always say to him, I am here to help you, we can do this together” (B281). She expressed awareness of this position she was taking when she noted, “he relies a little too much that somebody will help him. It is then getting that balance right” (B290). Clare also articulated a position as a mediator when she noted, “he will need you there to make sure he is not doing something that he, you know he would quite happily pick up a paintbrush and put it in his mouth” (C126). She further noted, “it

just shows that we have managed to break the work down into chunks that he can deal with and use for his own learning” (C153). Dena gave a good example of expressing a mediating position with D when she described how she modelled an answer for him. As she noted “as long as I say “this is what I think is the best thing to do, if it was me I would do it like this”” rather than “if I had just said “you should do this”” (D338) and so she was mediating rather than directing his response in that particular situation. Emma’s description of her helping E to make a mask and mediating a social interaction with one other child (E160) was also a good example of her adopting mediation as a position.

TA position as teacher

This position was one that four of the TAs articulated in their interviews and the language that they used was that of instruction rather than of mediation. Anna expressed this position in an example where she actively taught A how to recognise emotions. She stated, “for A, that almost had to be taught those emotions” (A511) and that his progress in this area came about “because of all the emotion work that we put in during year 3 and 4” (A505). Beth was forceful when she pushed B to communicate and noted, “I would have to say to him, you use your words, use your words to tell me, don’t just give me a gesture” (B319). Dena expressed her position as a teacher when D was “telling me he was worried about something and asking me what we should do to do it, rather than just general help with things” (D467). Emma articulated this position through her use of language around control and this was evident when she noted, “I am quite strict with her as well” (E58) and she described how being strict with E had improved E’s behaviour (E85).

For Frances and Clare the position of teacher wasn’t one that they articulated.

TA position as parent

This was a position that was characterised by nurturing language when the TAs talked about their relationships with the children that they were supporting. Anna expressed this when she talked of how she felt the need to protect A and noted, “I think you do feel that protection towards them” (A419). She talked more obviously in the position of parent when she said, “for me particularly, is it a motherly instinct, I am not sure, I just feel very protective towards him” (A435) and she talked very openly about how strong this instinct was in her with A. Beth also used nurturing language, although less strongly, when she noted, “he just, he needs somebody just to be caring and understand” and that “I think he just knows that I am there to look after him” (B396).

The fluctuation of TA positions

Some TAs were fairly static in their positions whilst others fluctuated in their positions as they described their relationships. Anna articulated each of the positions at different points during her interview and this was reflective of the strong relationship she had with A that she felt she could be, at times, a mediator, teacher or parent. Her confidence in their relationship was evident in her use of language around trust, the special nature of their bond and the rewards she felt as A progressed under her care. It was perhaps this confidence both in her ability to work with A and the strength of their relationship that allowed her to shift positions readily. As she noted, “for A it is far more difficult for him to understand and grasp the emotions of things” (A483) and she felt that her role was that “I want to protect him from things and help him understand things that are not always great in life and then embrace the things that are really good in life” (A450).

Beth also articulated the three TA positions at various times during her interview and readily adopted the position of facilitator and teacher. Her relationship with B was a

strong one with her primary role being to help and support him but also, at times, to instruct him such as when she pushed him to communicate. However, her parental position came out strongly when she said, “I think he just knows that I am there to look after him” (B395) and she had enough confidence in her relationship with B to adopt this nurturing role.

Clare and Frances found the relationship between them and the children they were supporting to be more difficult and so reverted to being mediators between the children and others. Clare expressed this strongly when she noted, “we do have a good relationship but he knows that the teacher is where the buck stops” (C51) and that “he will take far more notice of her than he will of me” (C55). Clare was much more caught up in the battle and conflict in their relationship, which was illustrated when she said, “I am not very fond of him” (C181) and “sometimes it feels like there is very little progression” (C219) Frances had similar difficulties to Clare in that she articulated mainly a position as a mediator and didn’t move from that position. She found it extremely difficult to connect with F and felt that she lacked the experience needed to work with him. She noted that the job was difficult for her and that, “I have struggled with it to be honest” (F350) and central to this seems to be that she hasn’t been able to connect with F. There was almost despair reflected in her voice when she noted, “it is a job, isn’t it, this is what I am doing, I am working with him that is what my role is” (F382).

4.3.3 Difficulties presented by the child

This superordinate theme was evident in all of the TAs’ interviews. This theme was around the presenting difficulties of working with a child with an autistic spectrum

disorder and so emergent themes were about difficulties the children had, such as with communication, social interaction, connecting emotionally, anxiety and behaviour. For some of the TAs these difficulties did not affect them or impact upon their ability to form a positive relationship whilst for others, such as Frances and Clare, those difficulties had a significant affect on their relationship.

Anna noted that one of A's main difficulties was with anxiety and that, what she termed "the real A" emerged once his anxiety was controlled. She noted, "you see the real A, so we have the sense of humour and he is happy because of the anxiety is not there so much" (A330). She also noted that behavioural issues impacted upon their relationship and that "he was having real meltdowns in class" (A162) but she also stressed that, because they had a positive relationship, he was able to talk to her about these difficulties and there was a strong sense from Anna that the relationship they had was able to help her deal with difficult situations. Beth noted that B had difficulties making eye contact and this affected his ability to engage with her but she was also positive about her ability to work with him such that "he will now look at me a little bit more – it might only be for a short period of time" (B99). She also noted that helping B overcome his difficulties made her feel "good, because I know he finds it so hard" (B132). Dena noted, "there are not very many moments when it's difficult" (D239) but did also report times when D "gets a little bit more blue" and "he does not like making a mistake" (D230). D's difficulties, though, did not impact on Dena's relationship as she noted, "he has been so nice to work with" (D238). Emma was aware that E had difficulties with communication and that "she does not understand a great deal" (E9) but she did feel a strong connection with her when E said her name. Emma stated that E could hardly talk at all when she first started working with her but that "I think I have helped her a great deal in the last six months just by being strict with her" (E83) and this resulted in her view that "I think she warmed to me

quite well and quite quickly and like I say she responds to most things that I ask her to do now” (E90), which indicated that Emma felt positive about their relationship despite E’s considerable difficulties.

For Clare the difficulties C had dominated her thoughts about their relationship. For example, she noted that his difficulties with writing impacted on his behaviour such that “it can be quite challenging and he can be quite physical” (C90). As a result of this, she noted, “I found working full-time with him really quite full on and so that is why I asked to cut back a little bit with him” (C71). Consequently, she stopped supporting him during English and Maths sessions and this improved their relationship “which makes life a lot easier” (C7) as she noted in her interview. Frances also found it difficult dealing with F’s difficulties and her interview was full of descriptions of F’s social, behavioural, language and emotional problems. For example, Frances noted that F “is not very socially able” (F52), “is not going to tell you how he is feeling about something” (F138) and “he is taking from you, you do not get very much back really” (F351). As a result Frances noted that, in terms of her relationship with F, “I have struggled with it to be honest” (F350) and “I find it a difficult relationship because you are giving all the time” (F366).

4.3.4 Personal and Professional Satisfaction

This superordinate theme was very much about how the TAs reflected upon their relationship and both the rewards they got from it both personally and professionally as well as the frustrations that it caused them. The language the TAs used was around pride in their relationship and the progress the child was making or frustrations around those issues or around feelings of lack of experience or support.

Pride and reward in the relationships and the children's progress

Anna expressed pride in her relationship with A as well as in his progress. She noted that when A trusted her enough to tell her his feelings it “made me feel really good and very proud of him” (A195). She felt a strong connection with A and this was illustrated when she related, “he often tells me, I cannot do this without you Mrs...” (A369) and that, for Anna, the relationship “means an awful lot to me” (A384).

Beth also noted feelings of pride in her relationship with B when she saw him interact with another pupils and showed affection towards her. She noted, “it amazes me that I am actually really pleased with it” (B594) and she also felt rewarded when “he looks for me, like in the dinner hall, and he gives me a big smile” (B399) and it was this personal connection that seemed to give her a strong sense of worth in her relationship with B.

Clare had difficulties with her relationship with C but still managed to find times where there was “a light bulb moment when he does respond which is quite rewarding when he does” (C268) and, again, it was this personal connection, however small, that seemed to impact so strongly on her.

Dena expressed this personal reward in slightly different terms, but equally strongly, when she noted, “it sort of becomes a bit more than just a job when you’ve got the relationship and you’ve really invested I suppose in it” (D443) and she saw this investment as having paid off in D’s “development, their skills, their progress” (D449).

Emma felt personally rewarded when E made progress and noted, “it makes me happy when she does things that I never thought she would be capable of” (E188) and that “it is such a joy to see her progress every week” (E235). Frances, who had a very difficult relationship with F, still found it possible to note feelings of pride in F’s progress. For example, she recalled how she felt when F dressed up as his favourite cat and stood up in

front of the class “and that was a really proud moment, the fact that he could do that and was happy to do that” (F327).

These feelings of pride in their relationships, and in the progress made by the children, seemed to define their role as TAs and their self-worth. It was interesting that personal connections were important for the TAs as many of them described how the children either connected personally to them or with others. To some of the TAs their rewards were about helping the child to overcome their difficulties, as Anna noted when she said, “if A can have as..I do not like to use the word “normal”, but as normal life as he possibly can and be accepted and feel he is part of his community and then I feel great about that” (A386). For Beth the idea that she could help B make friends and overcome his social difficulties was evident when she noted that “B finds this really hard, for him this is a big deal, he is talking to somebody, he wants to make friends with them” (B608). Emma noted a similar feeling of satisfaction when she helped E to interact with another child and that “it makes me happy when she does things that I never thought she would be capable of” (E188).

However, for some of the TAs the relationship had been very hard work and it had been difficult to get the personal and professional satisfaction that others had attained. For those TAs the relationships created many frustrations and it was these that defined how they felt both about the child and about themselves.

Frustrations in the relationships and with the children’s progress

Frances expressed frustrations in her relationship with F throughout her interview and noted, “it is very difficult working with a child like this” (F95). Her frustration was with both his perceived lack of progress and also “it is more that he does not want to do it” (F102). Her frustrations then spilt over into a perceived lack of support from the class

teacher, which impacted upon her ability to support F appropriately. She noted, “I am not happy with it at the moment. The whole situation is very difficult” (F227) as she went on to explain that the teacher was leaving and “she has washed her hands of every bit and then for me as well, because she has had enough” (F230). This external lack of support for Frances impacted upon her feelings about their relationship as well as F was more difficult to work with.

Frustrations occurred for Clare due to C’s difficulties with writing and his subsequent behaviour when asked to do written tasks. These difficulties resulted in her reducing her support time with him, as she “felt frazzled by the end of the day to be quite honest” (C77). Her relationship seemed to struggle because of the physical and emotional demands such that she found it hard to be positive about C when she noted, “I am not very fond of him” (C181). For Beth frustrations were more about B’s progress and she noted, “there are times when you certainly feel that you could get frustrated” (B176) and she clearly struggled to come to terms with those frustrations as “it does not make you feel very good about yourself” and “you are putting pressure on a child really, you do not want to be putting ..when they are finding life quite difficult as it is” (B191).

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION TO DISCUSSION

In this Chapter I will discuss the findings in the context of the research question and existing literature on the relationships between pupils with ASD in mainstream primary schools and their TAs. I will then look at the data in the context of theories of close relationships, with particular reference to Interdependence theory and the investment model put forward by Rusbult and Buunk (1993). The limitations of the research will then be discussed along with its implications for TAs, schools and Educational Psychologists. I will then discuss ideas for further research and reflect upon my role in the research.

5.2. KEY FINDINGS IN RELATION TO THE RESEARCH QUESTION

5.2.1 What are the experiences of TAs in forming relationships with pupils who have ASD in mainstream primary schools?

In this current research TAs talked about their relationships with children who have ASD and the themes that emerged were varied but, on analysis, fell into four distinct areas, namely issues around the nature of the attachment bond to the child; the difficulties the child had and how they impacted upon the relationship; the position of the TA in the relationship; and issues around the impact of the relationship on the TAs themselves in terms of their personal and professional satisfaction.

The experiences of the six TAs were varied but four of the TAs, namely Anna, Beth, Dena and Emma had relationships that I felt were positive and secure. They readily

articulated the themes of trust in the relationship, empathy, the special nature of the relationship and they felt pride in the progress and emotional connection of the pupils. When they talked about conflict or hardship in their relationships, or where they were frustrated by the pupils' progress or emotional connection to them, they did not let this affect their relationships and they continued to talk positively about the pupils they were supporting. These TAs described, through their experiences, feelings of satisfaction in the relationships even when they reported that they got back relatively little for the time and effort they invested in the pupils they were supporting. For these TAs the relationships meant a lot to them and they felt rewarded when the pupils made progress or connected to them emotionally.

In contrast, Clare and Frances found the relationships with their pupils to be problematic and they articulated ideas that were around the conflict and hardship in the relationships and the frustrations they had with the child's difficulties, their progress and connecting emotionally with them. Their experiences were generally negative and they felt dissatisfied with the relationships such that they were happy, even relieved, to move on from them. Their experiences focussed on factors such as the child's difficulties and, in Frances' case, feelings of not being supported in school and not having the relevant training or experience. Whilst both of these TAs did report some positive aspects in their relationships the difficulties far outweighed the few rewards for them and so the overall sense they made of their relationships was negative.

In describing their relationships with the pupils I was struck by how the themes that emerged from the TAs' descriptions were similar to those explored in previous research, which looked at the relationships between teachers, TAs and students with ASD. Where studies used the Student-Teacher Rating Scales (STRS), for example, relationships were referenced against closeness, conflict and dependence and found that, generally, teachers

reported positive relationships with students with ASD but that higher levels of conflict and dependence were related to lower levels of inclusion whilst higher levels of closeness were associated with higher levels of inclusion (Robertson et al., 2003). Indeed, the quality of student-teacher relationships was also related to the students' behavioural problems (Robertson et al, 2003; Brown & McIntosh, 2012; Blacher et al, 2014), social skills and presenting ASD symptoms (Robertson et al, 2003; Blacher et al, 2014).

This current research found that four of the TAs interviewed reported positive experiences of their relationships with the pupils with ASD whilst two TAs reported more problematic experiences with their relationships, which is broadly consistent with previous research that identified that TAs reported positive attitudes towards pupils with ASD (Robertson et al, 2003; Symes & Humphrey, 2011).

The concepts of closeness, conflict and dependence in relationships were ones that I felt were evident in this current study in the TAs' experiences of their relationships. For example, when the TAs talked of trust, empathy, the special nature of their relationship and togetherness, which were subordinate themes in this research, these were themes describing closeness in the relationship. Where the TAs talked about challenges and hardship in their relationships and focussed negatively on the children's difficulties, these were describing conflict in broad and rich detail. Where TAs talked about detachment and the need to allow the pupils to develop independence this reflected dependence in their relationship. Whilst it was not appropriate within this current study to attribute causal effects to factors it was relevant to note that the TAs' data explored themes of closeness, conflict and dependence as well as identifying children's difficulties as relating to their relationships. These difficulties included references to behaviour, social skills, communication skills and emotional connection, all of which were describing difficulties usually seen in children and young people with ASD. Indeed, this research found that,

where TAs described positive relationships with the pupils who had ASD, they emphasised the themes that related to closeness in their relationships. Where they had more problematic relationships, they emphasised the themes that related to conflict and difficulty in the relationships. However, the difference in this study was that the detail and richness of the data from the TAs provided a unique insight into their experiences, which previous studies lacked and so this study added to the existing data on TA relationships with pupils who have ASD and addressing an area previously noted as having a lack of research (Saddler, 2014).

5.2.2. Interpreting TAs' relationships with pupils with ASD in mainstream primary schools

The relationship that develops between a Teaching Assistant and the child they are supporting in a school setting is, I believe, an example of a unique and close relationship. It is unique because the TA is the designated 1:1 support for the child and so is there throughout the day, every day, for the child during school time. It is a different type of relationship from, say, that of a general class TA whose responsibilities are for all of the pupils in the class or from a class teacher who has responsibility for planning and delivering the curriculum to all of the pupils in the class. It is a close relationship because the TA is with the child, often throughout the day, and has responsibility for supporting the child at all times. The data collected from the six teaching assistants interviewed in this study clearly described the development of close relationships between them and the children that they were supporting, whether those relationships were perceived to be successful or not.

Human life is inherently social and the development of relationships is no different. Relationships are not one-sided and rely on reciprocal social interaction to take place where a connection is made between the participants such that the relationship can be sustained over time. Where one of the participants in the relationship has clearly identified social interaction and communication difficulties, such as in an Autistic Spectrum Disorder, the development of a social relationship is, potentially, more problematic.

In looking at the close relationship between the TAs and the pupils with ASD in this research it is possible to consider attachment behaviour as being relevant. Hazan and Shaver (1994) looked at attachment as an organisational framework for research on close relationships and concluded that attachment theory was limited in what it could offer. In particular, they noted that attachment theory ‘emphasises what of psychological value individuals will try to accomplish in their interactions’ and ‘does not stress the unique properties of human verbal interaction’ (Hazan & Shaver, 1994 p. 17). They believed that theories that emphasised socially constructed, shared meanings and narratives were more appropriate to the study of close relationships and argued that Interdependence Theory (Kelley et al, 1983) was a better model to use. They concluded that communication-oriented theories, such as Interdependence Theory, gave more depth in terms of ‘the ways in which internal working models of self, relationships and relationship partners get constructed’ (Hazan & Shaver, 1994 p.17). In considering this and the TA data from this study I felt that interdependence theory was an appropriate framework to use when trying to make sense of the TAs’ experiences of their relationships with pupils with ASD.

Interdependence theory

Interdependence Theory provides a comprehensive theory of social interaction (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Kelley, 2003). The theory centres on the interaction between the participants where this interaction has outcomes for each participant, either rewards or costs. Rewards, for example, could be pleasure and gratification whilst costs could be pain, distress or anxiety. Therefore, rewards are seen as those elements of the relationship that promote and prolong it whilst costs are those that inhibit the effective functioning of the relationship (Thibault & Kelley, 1959). Four types of rewards and costs were highlighted: emotional, instrumental, opportunity, and social (Kelley & Thibault, 1978).

Emotional rewards or costs are the positive or negative feelings that occur because of a relationship. Instrumental rewards or costs are the work a participant has to do because of the relationship. Opportunity costs are when someone has to give up something in a relationship while opportunity rewards are when something is gained because of the relationship. Social costs and rewards are determined by a person's social appearance and the ability to interact in social environments.

The balance of these costs and rewards can determine whether or not a relationship is successful. If the benefits of the relationship outweigh the costs then the relationship typically will continue. If the costs are higher than the benefits and other alternatives are available then the relationship will most likely dissolve.

Rusbult and Buunk (1993) extended this theory by proposing that, in each relationship, there is a satisfaction level where each participant evaluates the outcomes and accordingly feels satisfied or dissatisfied. This is measured against previous experiences of relationships. There is also a dependence level, which the participant uses to determine whether to stay in the relationship or not. This can be influenced by the attractiveness and

availability of other opportunities as well as the difficulties that are inherent in the current relationship. Rusbut and Buunk (1993) went further by suggesting an investment model, which is the process by which individuals become dependent on and committed to their relationships. They argued that dependence increases not only as a consequence of increasing satisfaction but also as a result of the investment in the relationship and because available alternatives are perceived to be poor.

Interdependence in relation to Teaching Assistant's relationships with children who have ASD:

Whilst Interdependence Theory is primarily based upon adult relationships it can, in my view, also transfer to close relationships such as those between adults and children. The relationship between TAs and the children they are supporting is a particular example of such a relationship. In considering the data from the teaching assistants in this study there was substantial evidence to support interdependence at work in respect of their descriptions of rewards, costs, satisfaction, dependence and their commitment to, and investment in, the relationship with the children they were supporting.

Rewards

The TAs in this study readily described the rewards that they got from the relationships they had and these were reflected in the emergent themes, particularly in relation to feelings of pride in the child's progress, emotional connection and social development and in descriptions of their attachment and the nature of the bond they had developed with the child.

Descriptions of feeling rewarded emotionally were numerous in the TA interviews. Anna noted how good she felt when A "trusted me enough to tell me how he was feeling" (A193) and that it "made me feel really really good and very proud of him" (A195) whilst

Beth noted how, when B “gives me the most beautiful smile” (B413) that this made her feel “really, really good, really good” (B416). Clare’s “light bulb moment when he does respond which is quite rewarding when he does” (C268) also highlighted how important that emotional connection was to her, even though her relationship with C was not an easy one. Emma described the reward she felt when E gave her eye contact as “I get kind of chuffed I suppose that to me is a big break through” (E107).

Instrumental rewards were also evident when TAs talked about building the relationship over time, the effort that was put into it and the work that resulted from the relationship. For example, when Beth described how hard she had to work to get B to focus in class she noted that “you can spend a large proportion of your time focussing him” (B205) but this time was well spent as she noted that “I think he knows, he can rely on me” (B231). Dena expressed this feeling in a slightly different way when she noted that she had to work hard with D to get him to answer questions such that he “probably thinks I’m quite annoying at times” (D315) but she felt that this investment was worthwhile and that “I would like to think he thinks “oh yes she has helped me”. Hopefully” (D322). For Frances, the relationship with F had few rewards but she did reflect on the fact that on a particular occasion when he dressed up as a cat and stood in front of the class “I was really proud of him” (F334).

In relation to opportunity rewards these were more difficult to identify in the TA interviews but there was a sense from many of the TAs that the opportunity reward for them was in the child’s opportunities broadening rather than necessarily their own. For example, Anna noted that the reward for her in her work with A was if he can have “as normal life as he possibly can and be accepted” (A388) whilst Dena noted that when she helped D prepare for secondary school transition successfully “you get a lot more out of the job as well I think” (D441).

Social rewards were also evident in the TA descriptions of their relationships but this was more about the children's social status rather than their own. In fact, the TAs were remarkably silent in relation to any feelings of their own advancement socially. Indeed, their reward was in seeing the children progress rather than remarking on any progress made themselves. Emma noted the positive feelings she had when she helped set up E's social interaction with another child and "just trying to include the other children with her she likes being part of the group which she did not use to" (E156). Beth noted how she felt good when B developed a strong social relationship with another pupil and that "it amazes me that I am actually really pleased with it" (B594).

Therefore, it was evident throughout these interviews that the TAs were noting how rewarding their work was and that these rewards were strongly linked to the children's emotional connection, progress and social development rather than any particular ideas about their own advancement or status.

Costs

The TAs described the costs in their relationship readily and these were evident in the emergent themes of the children's difficulties, conflict within the relationships and feelings of frustration at the children's lack of emotional connection, progress or social development.

In relation to emotional costs many TAs noted frustration with establishing emotional connections with the child that they were supporting. For example, Clare noted quite openly that "I am not very fond of him" (C181) and that he struggled to engage with her such that "he would far rather be playing with beans or whatever it is he is into playing with at the moment" (C228), implying that he was not interested in engaging with her. Frances noted that she struggled with the relationship with F and that "he is taking from

you, you do not get very much back really. With autistic children they do not ask you how your weekend is or whatever” (F351) and she seemed to find it difficult that F didn’t engage with her at that emotional level. For Anna the issue for her was that the emotional connection with A could feel too intense and she noted that “sometimes I think we can be a bit too close, and then I have to stand back” (A210) and also that “it can become a battle then and that is not a good thing for A and certainly not a good thing for me” (A215).

In relation to instrumental costs some of the TAs noted how hard the relationship was and the work that was required. A theme in this was the level of investment required with often very little coming back from the child. Frances noted that she struggled to balance out working with F and the emotional demands of her own children when she said, “I have just stretched myself far too thinly. I find that my relationship at home has suffered because I have used it all up.... all my patience is used up during the day” (F294). Thus, the demands and difficulties of working with F had a significant impact on her personally. Beth reflected on the hard work required in the relationship when she noted how she had to force B to communicate and push him to make progress. As she noted, “I would have to say to him, you use your words, use your words to tell me, don't just give me a gesture” (B319). Emma expressed some concerns about her relationship with E and that “I do not want it to be a too intense relationship” (E204), which implied that sometimes the intensity of work with E was too great and not helpful.

Opportunity costs were evident where TAs expressed problems with the relationships such that they could no longer continue in that relationship. For example, Frances clearly had significant difficulties with the relationship with F and also with feelings of lack of support and she noted that “he needs someone with much more experience” (F271) and “I am not working with him next year and I am quite relieved” (F393). She clearly felt that she was not the right person to be working with F and so was unable to continue in that

role. Clare also had difficulties in her relationship with C and noted that “I will probably move onto something else in September” (C171). However, for Beth there was also an opportunity cost, as she would not be working with B the following year and “it does make me feel very sad” (B455). In that sense the opportunity was being denied her for external reasons rather than as a result of her relationship with B.

Social costs are not something that were evident in the TA interviews, as they did not seem to be concerned about their own social status or position but were more concerned about how the children were coping.

Satisfaction

Satisfaction level is where an individual evaluates the outcomes in a relationship and, accordingly, feels satisfied or dissatisfied. In relation to the TA interviews satisfaction with the relationship was expressed in different ways. Anna expressed satisfaction when she talked of trust that had developed in the relationship, her pride in connecting emotionally with A and the reward in working with him and seeing him progress. The reward she received from the relationship with A seemed to significantly outweigh the costs for Anna. Beth also, overall, expressed satisfaction in her relationship with B and was sad that she would no longer be working with him the following year. Dena talked very positively about her relationship with D and, actually, revealed very few costs in the relationship other than some difficulties D had in relation to his anxiety. Overall, she expressed feelings of trust in the relationship and was able to talk about feeling pride in his progress. Emma also expressed, on many occasions, pride in connecting with E and in her progress and also felt rewarded in her relationship with E. Again, she seemed to be satisfied in the relationship as the rewards were expressed more readily than any costs within the relationship. Clare and Frances, though, expressed strong feelings of

dissatisfaction in the relationship with C and F respectively. Their frustrations focussed on a number of different elements, particularly the difficulties the child presented with and their own lack of experience and training. For these two TAs the relationships presented more as a conflict as they struggled to engage emotionally and socially and also found it difficult to see progress as a result of their support.

Investment

All of the TAs described, at some level, the investment they had made into the relationship. This investment took many forms. For example, Anna noted how her relationship developed over a number of years and that, in the early days of supporting A, she had to start by doing lots of fun things together with A to establish trust. She noted “we have built up a very, very good relationship to the point where he would trust me with any situation that he is in” (A112), that she had to do “lots of emotional work together” (A309) and that “I think sometimes I might drive him mad because I keep focussing him” (A360), which indicated the time and effort she was putting in to A to help him progress. She powerfully described her investment in the relationship when she said, “I almost feel his pain and I want to help him to not have that pain” (A438). Beth noted her investment in the relationship when she said, “it has been important to give him time and patience” (B203) and that she has had to invest a lot of time in focusing him such that “sometimes it can take, particularly at the beginning, half of the lesson, if not more, to get him to even, to pick up a pencil” (B207). This gives an idea of the time, effort and patience Beth required to support B in even simple, basic tasks in class. She further noted that, when she first starting working with B “actually about the first four months, I kept a diary, every day, for my benefit here at school just to write a few details about each lesson” (B471), which showed the investment of time she had made into the relationship from its beginning. Clare found it more difficult dealing with C in lessons

that involved writing and that she “felt a bit frazzled by the end of the day” (C77) such that “I asked to cut back a little bit with him” (C73). Therefore, for Clare the investment in the relationship with C at that time was too much for her and the costs too great such that she felt she needed to reduce her time with C. She also noted that her investment of time and effort into him produced “very very small amounts of progressions, so I think it is frustrating for me and for him” (C214) and that “sometimes you are banging on about the same things” (C222). For Clare it is clear that her investment of time into C was not producing the result she wanted and so caused her frustration even though she did recognise certain moments when “he does respond which is quite rewarding when he does but to be honest it is quite short-lived” (C269). Dena noted the investment in her relationship more positively to the extent that “it sort of becomes a bit more than just a job when you’ve got the relationship and you have really invested I suppose in it” (D443) and went on to describe how she had invested in “their development, their skills, their progress” (D448). Emma noted that her investment in her relationship with E “makes me happy when she does things that I never thought she would be capable of” (E188) but Emma also gave a note of caution about over-investment in the relationship when she said, “I do not want it to be a too intense relationship” (E203) and that sometimes she needed to step back so that E didn’t become too reliant on her.

Frances described her investment in the relationship with F as being practical support such as scribing for him in written tasks and trying to support him in class but she was frustrated by external factors such as the teacher not doing her job properly such that, as Frances said, “it leaves me and him slightly in this weird little bubble of having to try and keep ourselves busy” (F233). She also felt frustrated that she didn’t have the required training and experience and that she also had to balance out the demands of her own children such that she had “just stretched myself far too thinly” (F294) and that “I have

used it all up...all my patience is used up during the day” (F297). This implied that she was investing huge amounts of her time, effort and energy in trying to work with F but this was having a detrimental affect on her and her home life. She also noted that “it is quite taking, he is taking from you, you do not get very much back really” (F350). Like Clare she felt that her investment in the relationship yielded very little for her personally and professionally. It seemed that for four of the TAs the investment in the relationship resulted, overall, in positive rewards but for two of the TAs the investment did not produce that same feeling of satisfaction and success.

Commitment

Commitment level, as defined by Rusbult and Buunk (1993) ‘is a psychological state that globally represents the experience of dependence on a relationship’ and this ‘represents long-term orientation, including feelings of attachment to a partner and desire to maintain a relationship for better or worse’ (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993 p.180). In looking at the TAs’ relationships with their pupils there were striking examples in the TA interviews of commitment processes at work, which illustrated these working both positively and negatively. Anna described numerous instances when she demonstrated commitment in her relationship with A. For example, she described being called up by his parents to work with A when he was having difficulties dealing with his Grandfather’s illness even when she was not his allocated support. She said, “because of all the issues they were having with him, they called me in and asked me if I would do a little bit of work with A” (A144). Beth described her commitment to B’s progress when she said “I want him to do so well” (B189) and that “I always say to him, I am here to help you, we can do this together” (B281). Dena noted her commitment to the relationship with D when she said, “when you build a relationship with anyone you are sort of more invested in their progress and well-being” (D450).

However, commitment for Frances and Clare was more problematic because of the difficulties they had with their relationships with F and C. Frances felt unsupported because the class teacher was leaving and had “washed her hands of every bit and then for me as well, because she has had enough” (F231) which “leaves me and him slightly in this weird little bubble of having to try and keep ourselves busy” (F233). However, her commitment to the relationship was, in reality, tested by something more significant in that she felt she hadn’t got the training or experience to do the job properly such that “I think he needs someone much more” (F269) and “he needs someone with much more experience” (F271). She was not able to overcome the difficulties and commit to the relationship as she struggled to come to terms with the child’s difficulties and her own lack of training and experience.

Clare’s struggle with commitment in her relationship with C was similarly, a function of her frustrations with both managing C’s behaviour but also with seeing little progress for the effort, time and energy she put into the relationship. Even though she described her relationship with C as being a good this was only once she asked to reduce her time with him, as it was too difficult for her. This challenged her commitment to the relationship and so she sought to work with him at times when his behaviour was more likely to be easier to handle. She noted, “I felt a bit frazzled by the end of the day to be quite honest which you know is not the best thing for him or me” (C77). This balancing out of rewards and costs in the relationship, which leads to satisfaction and thus commitment was clearly evident in Clare’s discussion of her relationship with C. Ultimately, Clare’s commitment to her relationship with C was weak such that she noted, “I will probably move onto something else in September” (C171) and, more significantly, “I am not very fond of him” (C181).

Thus, commitment to the relationship can be seen in four of the TA interviews but can be questioned in two of the TA relationships. It appeared that a process whereby the TAs weighed up the rewards and costs in the relationships, and their investment in it, before deciding upon a level of commitment to the relationship was evident in the data from the TAs.

5.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

In this section I will look at the implications of the research for the teaching assistants, the schools where the TAs work and for Educational Psychologists, particularly in relation to working in schools with TAs who support pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders.

5.3.1. Implications for Teaching Assistants

Teaching Assistants are employed throughout mainstream schools both in a general capacity as classroom support and as specific, 1:1 support for children with special educational needs (SEN) funded either directly from the school's special needs budget or via a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education, Health and Care Plan.

Their effectiveness has come under scrutiny in recent years via research that has concluded that they have little impact on pupil outcomes (Blatchford et al., 2012; Higgins & Gulliford, 2014) and yet they are highly regarded by class teachers and senior managers in schools and represent a significant proportion of the school workforce (Rose, 2001; Emam & Farrell, 2009).

TAs often support pupils with complex and significant SEN, including learning and behavioural difficulties and pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders are amongst the most challenging pupils to support in mainstream schools due to their language, social

interaction and communication difficulties, as well as their often challenging behaviour. Previous research has indicated that TAs working with pupils who have ASD require support and training to be able to work effectively and also need support systems in place within schools (Blatchford et al., 2009b)

This research described the experiences of six TAs in forming relationships with pupils who had ASD and who were in mainstream primary schools and it revealed that those TAs invested very significant amounts of time, hard work and emotional energy into their support of those pupils. However, they ended up with varying levels of commitment to the relationships dependent upon the rewards they got out of the relationship set against the costs to them of continuing in the relationship. Where they felt rewarded it was often in relation to making emotional and social connections with the children and through seeing them progress. Where they found it difficult was in coping with the children's social, behavioural and communication difficulties, as well as struggling to make an emotional connection with them. They also found it difficult when they perceived the children were not making progress. The balancing of these rewards, costs and the investment of time contributed to the TAs' level of commitment to the relationship and, indeed, whether they were likely to continue with it.

There are, I believe, four main implications this research has for TAs:

1. TA effectiveness
2. TA job satisfaction
3. TA continuing professional development
4. Social inclusion for pupils with ASD

TA effectiveness

This research highlighted the investment the TAs made in developing their relationships with the children they were supporting. Where these relationships were positive and secure they developed trust, an understanding of the child's difficulties and felt rewarded for the progress the child made. The themes developed from the data suggested that developing a secure and positive relationship was a foundation for the TAs feeling that they were more effective when supporting the child and that they contributed actively to that progress. This resulted in a secure commitment to the relationship. At the same time when TAs didn't have a positive and secure relationship with the child their ability to work effectively was undermined such that they struggled to see progress and focus on the child's difficulties or their own lack of experience and training. When this happened they did not feel a commitment to the relationship. Therefore, one major implication of this research is that developing a positive and secure relationship between TAs and the children with ASD they are supporting is likely to actively contribute to their commitment to the relationship and, therefore, to their ability to support those children effectively. In essence, if a TA feels positive in his or her relationship with the child then that TA is more likely to be committed to the relationship and then more willing and able to take on board strategies and implement them effectively with the child. Educational Psychologists working with TAs who feel committed and secure in their relationships with the pupils they are supporting will be able to work with strategies that build upon those relationships whilst those TAs who are struggling more with their relationships might require training and support from the EP that is targeted at developing those relationships. This is then likely to contribute towards TA effectiveness in their support of the pupils in school through a more detailed understanding of the relationship that exists between them.

Where previous research has been undertaken the evidence for TA effectiveness is varied with the DISS project report (Blatchford et al. 2012) noting that ‘those pupils receiving most TA support made less progress than similar pupils who received little or no TA support (p. 323). This view was further supported by Higgins and Gulliford (2014), who noted that TA support had small or no effects on attainment and Howes (2003) reporting little and inconsistent impact on overall attainment scores. However, Saddler (2014) noted that these reports could be criticised as they focussed solely on statistical academic outcomes and gave no acknowledgment to the influence of TAs on social inclusion, which she felt were inextricably linked to academic achievement. She also noted that the research failed to gather ‘substantial qualitative data concerning TAs’ influence on the process of social inclusion, rendering their conclusions, to an extent, unreliable’ (Saddler, 2014, p.150). I would argue that a significant implication of this current research is that the qualitative data produced raises the possibility that the nature of, and commitment to, the relationship between a TA and the child they are supporting could be an important factor in TA effectiveness, particularly in relation to the child’s core difficulties with social interaction and communication. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this research to provide evidence for specific outcomes, and this is something that future research could investigate, it is possible to hypothesise that having a positive, secure and committed relationship between a TA and child is likely to impact upon TA effectiveness in line with Saddler’s view (Saddler, 2014) that TAs could be a powerful influence on social inclusion and, therefore, academic achievement. I would argue that this is particularly relevant for TAs supporting pupils with ASD, where the child’s difficulties with social interaction and communication are significant.

TA job satisfaction

It is important that TAs understand that supporting pupils with ASD is demanding and that they need to invest a significant amount of their time, hard work and emotional energy into that support. The evidence from this study suggests that rewards for this investment in the relationship are in establishing a strong, trusting relationship with the pupils and feeling that they offer a significant contribution to their progress, particularly in relation to emotional connection and social interaction. As noted previously, a secure and committed relationship could be linked to the TA being able to support the child more effectively. Therefore, if a TA feels positive and secure in his or her relationship with the child then it is likely that the TA will feel greater job satisfaction. As noted earlier, satisfaction levels are determined to a significant degree by the balance of the rewards in the relationship set against the costs and difficulties in the relationship. The costs in supporting pupils with ASD, from the data in this study, are that their difficulties are often significant, that it can be a challenge to establish strong emotional connections and that progress can be limited for the amount of time and effort invested in the relationship. An insecure or problematic relationship is likely to result in the TA feeling less committed and being unable to support the child effectively. This could result in the TA feeling dissatisfied and even unable to continue in the support role, as evidenced by two of the TAs in the sample in this research. However, where TAs develop a positive, secure and committed relationship to the children this is likely, in my view, to contribute to job satisfaction.

TA continuing professional development

This research highlighted that working with pupils with ASD is demanding and that TAs face considerable challenges in developing a positive and secure relationship with

children with ASD. In particular, the primary presenting difficulties that the pupils had in communication, social interaction, behaviour and emotional affect impacted upon the ability of the TAs to engage with them and form reciprocal social relationships.

Consequently, the TAs needed to invest time, hard work and emotional energy into making the relationship work. Many of the TAs noted that they had to invest a significant amount into the relationship with the children to receive small amounts back and that there were often times when it seemed that they got little back for the hard work they put into supporting the child. Therefore, it is important for TAs to have an understanding of the nature of ASD, how it presents and how it impacts upon their ability to form relationships both with adults and other children. This has an implication both for supporting TAs in schools and training them in the key issues relating to children with ASD and their ability to form reciprocal, close relationships. This understanding will then impact upon having realistic expectations of both the child's potential and also the nature and development of the relationship between TA and child.

It is also clear from most of the TAs in this research that there were considerable rewards for them when they were able to develop a good relationship with the children they were supporting. Whilst it is likely to require a considerable degree of hard work the payoff for TAs in seeing the children progress, particularly socially and emotionally, is very worthwhile. However, it is clear that for TAs to develop a strong and positive relationship with the children they are supporting that they themselves need support through ongoing training and through support from senior management within the school where they work. Previous research has highlighted the need for TAs working with pupils who have ASD to have support to help them develop effective interventions and to be trained in strategies for supporting pupils with ASD (Humphrey & Symes, 2013). This research indicates that TAs also need support in helping them develop effective relationships and this relies on

an understanding of the difficulties presented by a child with ASD in forming social relationships as well as an understanding of the key factors in developing effective relationships between people. Interdependence theory suggests that there is a need to understand both perspectives in a relationship and that each person is linked in a dynamic system. On that basis it is essential that TAs understand their own needs in the relationship as well as those of the child. For example, a common aspiration amongst the TAs in this research was for the children to make progress and whilst this took different forms there was an underlying theme of seeing social and emotional development as key to progress. Where the TAs saw this progress, particularly when the child connected to them personally, the relationship was described as more positive, secure and a greater commitment to the relationship was evident. Conversely, where the TAs were frustrated in the relationship this was often linked to the child's social and emotional development. It is interesting to note that the TAs rarely talked about the children's academic or curriculum levels and that progress both for the child and for the TA in the relationship was linked intrinsically to social and emotional factors. Given that ASD is, fundamentally, a social communication disorder it is clear that TAs saw their relationship as trying to address the social and emotional impairments they saw in the children they were supporting. The implication for this is that it is essential that TAs understand how ASD presents both as a social communication disorder with an impact upon developing social relationships but also specifically for the child they are supporting. Those TAs in this research who had the most secure and positive relationships were those who understood the child's difficulties but were not frustrated by them. They realised that developing the relationship was hard work and that it took time and an investment of their effort and energy to produce results, however small.

Therefore, I see a significant implication of this research as being around TA training and support both in school and by external professionals, This needs to be in the area of understanding ASD and how it presents, particularly in developing social relationships, as well as an understanding of how relationships develop between adults and children.

Inclusion in schools for pupils with ASD

Previous studies have highlighted the need for research into social inclusion for pupils with ASD and the impact that TAs have on this process (Saddler, 2014; Humphrey & Symes, 2013). It is also the case that pupils with ASD respond more positively to structure, routine and consistency and often dislike change. This current study noted that, where TAs had positive and secure relationships with the pupils with ASD they were supporting, they felt satisfied with their job, invested time and effort into it and were committed to the relationship. This was, potentially, positive for the pupils with ASD as the TAs were more likely to invest time and effort into developing that relationship and this could have had an impact on social inclusion for those pupils. Where TAs were struggling with their relationship with pupils with ASD, this could also have had an impact upon social inclusion for those pupils, particularly if TAs left the role and the pupils then had to cope with developing new relationships in school both with adults and with peers. The implication from this research is, therefore, that fostering positive and secure relationships between TAs and pupils with ASD could, potentially, impact on social inclusion for those pupils. This adds weight to the view expressed by Saddler (2014) that TAs could have a significant impact on social inclusion for pupils with ASD and further research is required to investigate this.

5.3.2. Implications for Schools

Teaching Assistants represent a significant proportion of school staff and also a significant proportion of the school's annual staffing budget. Given that previous research has highlighted that TAs might not be providing value for money in terms of outcomes for pupils in schools, TA training and support is vitally important. Previous research has noted that TAs working with pupils who have ASD need support and training but there has been little research on the need to look at support and training in and around the development of relationships with pupils with ASD. This research highlights the importance of TAs developing positive, secure and committed relationships with pupils who have ASD and that, where possible, training and support should target both the issues around developing relationships for pupils with ASD but also strategies TAs can use to help understand more about those relationships and their importance. Some TAs in this research highlighted their lack of experience and training as a factor in struggling to develop a relationship with the pupils they support. One specifically noted her lack of ASD training as having an impact upon her feelings around being able to develop an effective relationship with the pupil she supported. The outcome for two of the TAs in this study, who both struggled with their relationships, was to move on to supporting other pupils and so there is a very real impact for both the TAs and the children they support when the relationship struggles. Given the importance of stability, structure and consistency for pupils with ASD changes in support staffing are not desirable and so schools should consider providing support for their TAs whereby they can discuss their relationship with the child and how it is working as well as training for TAs in understanding about ASD and how to develop effective relationships with pupils who have ASD. This implies that TAs working with pupils with ASD need some form of

ongoing supervision so that they can discuss their relationship, amongst other things, and be able to articulate training needs in this area.

5.3.3. Implications for Educational Psychologists

Educational Psychologists (EPs) are often called upon to work with TAs in schools and, given the numbers of pupils with ASD in mainstream schools, this work is likely be with TAs supporting pupils with ASD. It is also part of an assessment of children with ASD to discuss their progress with the TAs who support them and to look at how that support is being implemented across the curriculum. EPs also provide training and support to TAs on many aspects of supporting children, as well as providing training to schools on ASD. The dynamic of the relationship between TAs and pupils with ASD is one that is worth considering when EPs work with either the child who has ASD or the TA supporting him or her.

Where EPs work directly with pupils who have ASD and who are supported by a TA this research indicates that it would be beneficial for EPs to talk to the TA about their relationship with the child to try and gain an idea as to how positive, secure and committed that relationship is. If the EP feels that the relationship is secure and committed then this can provide a foundation for structured work on developing that relationship further and delivering effective interventions. If the EP feels that the relationship is more problematic, less secure and the TA is showing less commitment then the EP can target support more effectively in this area and offer specific interventions to help the TA develop the relationship. This might be on understanding ASD and how it presents in that particular child or on strategies the TA might use to help develop the relationship. It could also be important for the EP to support the school in

identifying how the TA's needs could best be met and this might include a recognition that the relationship is not working and the implications of that for the TA, the child and the school.

The emergent themes developed from the TAs in this research are a helpful tool for EPs to consider when thinking about working with TAs who are supporting pupils with ASD. Firstly, a consideration of the nature of the relationship between the TA and child is important in gaining an understanding as to how positive, secure and committed the TA is to the relationship. Secondly, where TAs talk of the child's difficulties the EP will gain an understanding of their knowledge and understanding of the child's issues and their level of knowledge in issues relating to ASD. Thirdly, where TAs talk about their own personal and professional satisfaction will help the EP to understand the rewards they get from the relationship as well as the difficulties that the TA is experiencing. This will help inform the EP about potential support for the TA and strategies that might be effective for the TA when working with the child in school. Finally, in considering the TA's position in the relationship will help the EP to determine how secure and committed the TA feels in the relationship. TAs who are able to establish different positions and see the role as more than just a professional one are more likely to be committed to the relationship and so potentially more willing to take on board strategies.

Where EPs are working directly with TAs in terms of training this research indicates that any training on ASD should include reference to the development of an effective relationship with the child, particularly in light of the difficulties pupils with ASD have with social relationships. EPs should be encouraged to establish the level of knowledge, training and experience of TAs and their confidence and security in the relationship between them and the child as being an important element in successful and effective support for that child in school. TAs should have, as part of ASD training, information on

the difficulties children with ASD have in forming relationships and how this might impact upon their particular relationship in school. The evidence from TAs in this research indicates that working with children who have ASD is hard, that relationships with them take time to develop and that they require a significant investment of time, effort and energy from TAs for often very small perceived progress. EPs can help TAs to understand the dynamics at work in developing relationships between TAs and children with ASD so that realistic expectations can be set for their working relationship.

5.4. LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH, IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE

RESEARCH AND RESEARCHER'S ROLE

In this section I will look at the limitations of this research, the implications for future research and reflect on my particular role in the research.

5.4.1. Limitations of the research

This present study should be considered in the context of a number of limitations relating to methodology, findings and interpretation of those findings.

Using IPA as a data collection and analysis approach did 'offer a rich, detailed, first person account of their experiences' (Smith et al., 2009 p.56) and this was in keeping with the aims of this current study. However, the findings in this study only offered a snapshot of a small group of teaching assistants at a particular time and within a very specific context. The development of emergent themes, subordinate and superordinate themes was subjective and dependent upon the researcher's interaction with the transcripts. Whilst the double hermeneutics that took place were factored into this study, and were an essential element of IPA, it did place limitations on the study as being particularly located in a specific time and place. The idea that the same process occurring in a different location, with different people and at a different time might have a significant effect on the findings was, in itself, a limitation but one that was contained within this type of study. Indeed, the strength of this study was in the depth of detail that emerged from the analysis of the TA transcripts but it must also be recognised that this placed limitations on what could be generalised from the research.

The sample size of six TAs was appropriate within the research design for a study using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and care was taken to use a purposive and homogenous sample. However, this study only looked at TAs working with pupils in

mainstream primary schools and it is possible that different findings would have emerged from TAs supporting pupils in secondary schools or special schools. It was also the case that, due to the limitations on participants, there was a limited recruitment sample to choose from and so the participants that fitted the criteria were used. As a result the sample was all female and was a mixture of TAs, some of whom had been working with the pupils for a number of years whilst others had worked for less than a year with the pupils. It is possible that TAs who had been in the job longer would be more likely to have secure and committed relationships whilst those with more training and experience might also show more commitment to their relationships. Indeed, steps could have been taken to identify TAs that had a minimum level of experience with pupils with ASD as well as those who had been working with the pupils for a minimum amount of time, but this was not possible within the limited sample available. It is possible that including more details about the participants, such as their level of experience, ASD training and age might have added greater depth to the analysis and enhanced the IPA process. Whilst I chose not to include that information in this study participant information was something that other IPA studies have included and so it is possible that this would have added to the discussion on the themes that emerged in the context of this information.

It was also the case that time limitations in being able to undertake the interviewing also reduced the options for the sample recruitment. There were no male participants in this study and so the issues relating to male TAs developing relationships with children who have ASD were not considered. Again, this was due to the limitations of sample recruitment in the time available.

It was also a limitation of this study that the level of severity of the pupils' ASD was not known. It is possible that the severity of the child's autistic spectrum disorder and presenting social interaction, communication and behavioural difficulties, could have had

an impact upon the TAs' ability to develop a positive secure and committed relationship. For example, it is possible that pupils with more severe ASD would be more difficult to develop positive and secure relationships with and would have been more challenging to support. Indeed, research has indicated that ASD symptomology impacts upon the tensions experienced by teachers (Emam & Farrell, 2009) and that the behaviour difficulties associated with ASD impact upon student-teacher relationships with pupils who have ASD (Eisenhower et al., 2015). However, research also noted that the level of problem behaviour did not significantly predict the relationship between students with ASD and special educational assistants (Brown & McIntosh, 2012). The impact of severity of ASD on TAs' relationships with pupils who have ASD is, therefore, a relevant consideration and a topic for further research.

There are potentially many other factors that might influence the development of relationships between TAs and children with ASD in mainstream primary schools. For example, I have referenced attachment behaviour as possibly being something that could influence the development of their relationships but this study did not have the information, in my view, to discuss this in depth, as there was no information available on the attachment status of either the TAs or the children they are supporting. Whilst this might be the subject of further research it was not something that was specifically addressed in this study and so this is a potential limitation in this research.

This study focussed on the idiographic and so was concerned with the particular. This made generalising the findings of this study to the wider population problematic although cautious generalisations were possible in the context of other similar research studies. Indeed, an idiographic approach does not rule out generalisations, but offers a different way of making those generalisations and 'it locates them in the particular, and hence, develops them more cautiously' (Smith et al., 2009 p. 29). In this study care was taken to

avoid making causal claims but it was felt appropriate to link the findings to TA practice in schools with pupils with ASD and, potentially, to make cautious generalisations about TA effectiveness, job satisfaction, professional development and pupils' social inclusion based upon the findings in this study. The limitation of this lies, though, in the expertise of the researcher and the skill required to make such cautious generalisations from the data. This is influenced, to some degree, by the experience of the researcher in conducting IPA studies. Whilst I followed the protocols set out by Smith et al (2009) in conducting an IPA research study I have to accept my own limitations and expertise in doing so as this was the first IPA study that I had conducted. Therefore, a further limitation of this study could well be my own lack of expertise in undertaking IPA studies. I sought to reduce this effect by following established processes used in IPA studies set out by experienced practitioners in the field (Smith et al., 2009) and by careful consideration of the research methodology, collection and analysis of data. However, my inexperience in analysing and interpreting data in an IPA study should be considered in this research.

5.4.2. Implications for future research

This research provided rich data on TA's experiences of forming relationships with children who have ASD. However, given the limitations noted previously there are five areas I feel are important for future research studies. These are:

- Investigating the experiences of TAs in forming relationships with children and young people with ASD in secondary and special schools.
- Investigating the link between secure and committed relationships with TAs and children with ASD and experience and training of TAs

- Investigating the link between secure and committed relationships and outcomes for pupils with ASD
- Investigating the links between severity of ASD and forming secure and committed relationships with children who have ASD
- Investigating the impact of attachment behaviour in TAs and the children they support with ASD.

Investigating the experiences of TAs in forming relationships with children and young people with ASD in secondary and special schools

This current research highlights the issues relating to forming social relationships with children who have ASD in mainstream primary schools but it would be worthwhile to note whether similar themes and issues relating to the development of close relationships exist for TAs in supporting pupils with ASD in secondary schools or special schools.

Secondary schools have unique factors that might influence the development of relationships such as greater numbers of subjects and teachers that the young person has to interact with and this places demands upon both the pupils and the TAs in their work. In special schools TAs work in a slightly different way and the pupils are often with a peer group of similar needs. It would be interesting to see if the issues around investment of time and commitment are similar in these settings and so studies that aimed to look at the experiences of TAs supporting pupils with ASD in secondary and special schools would be useful in this regard.

Investigating the link between secure and committed relationships with TAs and children with ASD and experience and training of TAs

It is possible that if TAs have greater training and experience, particularly in ASD, then this would have an impact upon their ability to form positive, secure and committed relationships. Research that investigated the impact of training and experience on the forming of relationships would be useful, as it would identify training implications for TAs, schools and Educational Psychologists. This could be investigated in two ways. Firstly, having a sample of TAs covering a range of experience and training in ASD and talking to them about their experiences of forming relationships with children who have ASD would help to see if those with greater training and experience had more secure and committed relationships. Secondly, it would be possible to provide TAs with specific training to see if this impacted upon their relationships with children who have ASD.

Investigating the link between secure and committed relationships and outcomes for pupils with ASD

Whilst this current research highlighted the possibility that TAs with a more positive, secure and committed relationship are likely to be more effective there is no specific link to particular outcomes in this study. Therefore, it would be useful for future research to look at whether TAs with secure and committed relationships have an impact on outcomes for children with ASD. In particular, the impact on developing social interaction and communication skills and social inclusion would be worthwhile, as this follows on from suggestions made by Saddler (2014) in her review of TA effectiveness.

Investigating the links between severity of ASD and forming secure and committed relationships with children who have ASD

One of the limiting factors in this current research was a lack of information on the severity of the children's ASD and how it might impact on forming relationships with TAs. It is logical to link greater severity of ASD with greater difficulties in forming relationships as there are likely to be more significant social communication and interaction difficulties presenting in a child with more severe ASD, which will make forming a positive, secure and committed relationship potentially more challenging. Therefore, a study that looked at TAs supporting pupils with a range of severity of ASD would be useful and worthwhile and would have possible implications for support and training for TAs and schools.

Investigating the impact of attachment behaviour in TAs and the children they support with ASD

This research raises the issue of what is happening in developing close relationships between TAs and children with ASD. An area that would be worth studying would be how attachment forms between TAs and children with ASD and this could be linked to attachment behaviour both in the TAs and in the children themselves. There are measures of attachment behaviour that can be administered and it would be useful to see if secure attachment behaviour results in secure and committed relationships with children who have ASD.

Given that there is a paucity of research on how TAs and, indeed, other adults develop relationships with children who have ASD there is a need for research to explore this in greater depth to provide professionals working with children who have ASD the widest

knowledge base of information in order to help develop effective support, training and strategies for TAs in schools.

5.4.3. Researcher's role in the study

In reflecting on my role in this piece of research I was mindful that one of the most challenging aspects of working with children who have ASD is in developing a social and emotional relationship with them and so the opportunity to explore this area through research was exciting for me and I was surprised when I found, during my literature search, that there was a very limited amount of research in this area and none that specifically looked at TAs' relationships with children who have ASD. My personal experience of assessing pupils with ASD, observing in classrooms and working with TAs was that the relationships between TAs and the children they support were, potentially, a very important element in providing effective support. However, I was mindful of bracketing this prior knowledge and experience and not allowing it to influence the collection of data from the interviews with the TAs.

During this research I found that continually reading and re-reading the TA transcripts was a transformative process, which revealed deeper levels and meanings as I began to analyse the language the TAs used. The more I became involved in this process the more I felt that I entered the world of the TAs and began to see the issues that dominated their thoughts about how they were relating to the child that they were supporting. I also noted how I became drawn to their language around the children's difficulties, their own feelings around trying to connect with the children and their feelings of pride and frustration in the relationships they were developing. These thoughts and feelings resonated very much with my own experiences of working with children and young

people with ASD both as a teacher and Educational Psychologist. Therefore, I became aware very quickly of the double hermeneutics process at work within this type of interpretative phenomenological analysis and how my own experiences shaped my interpretations of the TAs' language.

In undertaking this research I found myself being significantly tested and challenged personally and intellectually. I have previously had little experience of undertaking research as I have worked as an applied Psychologist over 20 years in private practice and have had little opportunity to undertake research projects. Working through a systematic literature review was challenging and I found that I needed a lot of support to help structure the review effectively. This was made more challenging given that there was little research on TAs' relationships with children who have ASD. This was also the first detailed study I had conducted using IPA and so the challenge of collecting, analysing and interpreting the data was a very real one for me and I relied on experienced practitioners in the field to help structure my approach to the study and in the construction of my research methodology. This was via books and articles but also through attendance at lectures on IPA.

I feel that my strengths are in being analytical and logical and so developing a systematic approach to the research and write up helped me in terms of organising myself and the data. More challenging for me was to try and find the right balance between detailed analysis of the rich data and connecting this to theory and practice. Initially, my ideas were towards looking at attachment theory and even positioning theory but as I worked through the literature I realised that the data drew me more obviously towards Interdependence Theory and particularly the investment model put forward by Rusbult and Buunk (1993). This resonated with me strongly on three levels. Firstly, my own experience of working with pupils who have ASD has made me acutely aware of the

difficulties they have in developing social relationships and so working with them is highly challenging in that regard. In my own work with children who have ASD I am aware of how difficult it can be to form a relationship with them and how that relationship can often be on the basis of getting little back in terms of reciprocal social interaction.

Secondly, I am aware through my own professional work as an EP that TAs have a very demanding and challenging role in schools, particularly with children who have complex needs like those with ASD. My own experience has shown me that TAs who work 1:1 with children in schools invest huge amounts of their time and energy into their work and that they can often find it frustrating when the relationship is a challenging one.

Thirdly, and finally, I am very aware that going through the interviews with the TAs and then analysing their transcripts in forensic detail has, in itself, been an example of a developing and close relationship, as I became increasingly more involved in their thoughts and feelings about their work with the children they support. Whilst this has been very much a one-sided relationship with the rewards and costs a result of the challenges of analysing the data and interpreting their language I am also aware that my interpretations of their world is intrinsically linked to both their experiences and my own. In that respect the double hermeneutics process is, in itself, possibly an example of Interdependence Theory at work. This was brought home to me powerfully when I had the opportunity to feedback my findings to the TA group that I interviewed. I had intended this session to be an opportunity to feedback to the TAs the main findings of the research and allow them the opportunity to talk about the study in relation to those findings. In doing this I felt that it was important to recognise their role in the research and that it was professional courtesy to follow up their active participation in the study by feeding back the findings to them. Only four of them could take part in the feedback

session as two of the group had moved on to new jobs in different schools and I was unable to contact them. However, the remaining four TAs took part in an animated discussion about their views on my interpretations of their experiences of the relationships they had talked about with me. They were particularly interested in the idea of rewards and costs in the relationship and the idea of commitment resonated with them. Looking back at that discussion it was interesting to note that the two TAs who could not attend were the ones who had moved on from their jobs and had experienced the more problematic relationships with the pupils they were supporting. The nature of the discussion might have been very different had they been in the feedback group and it raises issues about feeding back to participants where consideration should be made as to the potential impact of the discussion on them. For example, certain TAs might have felt uncomfortable with the discussions in relation to comments they had made and how these might have been perceived by the rest of the group. I sought to keep to the general findings in this research and not to highlight specific comments from individual TAs but it is important that feedback of information to participants who have been involved in studies should be considered carefully with the risks to the participants being carefully weighed up. Possible safeguards could be to make sure the discussion is only about the general themes and findings and not specifically about individual TAs and that this is clearly articulated before the discussion commences with the opportunity for any TA to withdraw from the session if they felt uncomfortable with individual feedback offered if any TA felt that was necessary. None of these issues arose in my feedback session with the four TAs but should be considered in future research studies using IPA.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS

Whilst there is an emerging body of research into the effectiveness of Teaching Assistants in supporting pupils in schools there is a paucity of research into the relationships that develop between TAs and the children they support, particularly in relation to children with autistic spectrum disorders. TAs represent a significant proportion of a school's workforce and much of the work they do is in direct support of pupils with complex and challenging educational needs, such as ASD.

The TAs in this study articulated the challenges of supporting pupils with ASD but also the rewards of doing so. They gave rich and detailed information about their relationships, which added to the current research knowledge on how TAs work with, and relate to, pupils with ASD. The relationship between TAs and pupils with ASD continues to be an important subject of research, particularly in relation to social inclusion, and, given the unique role TAs play in the direct support of these pupils in schools, it is essential that good quality research continues to identify those factors that help TAs support pupils with ASD as effectively as possible.

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APPENDIX 1

LITERATURE SEARCH PARAMETERS

- The literature search was undertaken between October 2015 and June 2016.
- The search was undertaken on 5 separate occasions to check for consistency of searches. These were in October 2015, November 2015, January 2016, March 2016 and June 2016. Each search followed the same use of search terms.
- Search was undertaken on the PsychINFO (Ebsco host) database

Search names and terms

The following search terms and names were used:

SEARCH NAME	SEARCH TERMS
ASD	ASD; Autistic Spectrum Disorder; Autism; Autistic Spectrum Condition; Asperger Syndrome
Teaching Assistants	Teaching Assistants; TAs; Learning Support Assistants; LSAs; Paraprofessionals; Special Education Assistants
Teachers	Teachers; Educators
Relationships	Relationships; student-teacher relationships; student-Teaching Assistant relationships; Interpersonal relationships
Experiences	Experiences

The number of hits for each search is summarised below. The number of relevant papers refers to the papers that were left after the inclusion /exclusion criteria were applied.

Inclusion and Exclusion criteria

INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
Empirical research that focuses on the relationships between teachers/ teaching assistants and pupils with ASD	Secondary research
	Non-empirical research
	Participants who are not students with ASD, teachers or teaching assistants
Published research from 1995 onwards	Published in a language other than English language
	Unpublished research

Search data

SEARCH TERMS	NUMBER OF HITS	NUMBER OF RELEVANT PAPERS
Teaching assistants; experiences; relationships; ASD;	1	1
Teachers; experiences; relationships; ASD	29	2
Student-teacher relationships; ASD	8	3
TAs; ASD; relationships	2	2
Teachers; ASD; relationships	113	7

Search 1

Teaching Assistants: experiences; relationships; ASD/Autism

1 hit

1 relevant Emam & Farrell, 2009

Search 2

Teachers; experiences; relationships; ASD/Autism

29 hits

21 dissertations rejected

6 rejected against inclusion/exclusion criteria

2 relevant Eisenhower et al, (2015)

Blacher et al (2014)

Search 3

Student-teacher relationships; ASD

8 hits

2 dissertations rejected

4 rejected as didn't meet inclusion/exclusion criteria

Search 4

Teaching Assistants; ASD; relationships

2 hits

2 relevant Emam and Farrell (2009)

Symes and Humphrey (2011)

Search 5

Teachers; ASD; relationships

113 hits

48 dissertations rejected

7 relevant

Eisenhower et al (2015)

Blacher et al (2014)

Lindsay et al (2014)

Brown and McIntosh (2012)

Symes and Humphrey (2011)

Emam and Farrell (2009)

Robertson et al (2003)

The searches above were repeated on five occasions.

APPENDIX 2

ETHICS COMMITTEE APPLICATION

The Tavistock and Portman 
NHS Foundation Trust

Tavistock and Portman Trust Research Ethics Committee (TREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

This application should be submitted alongside copies of any supporting documentation which will be handed to participants, including a participant information sheet, consent form, self-completion survey or questionnaire.

Where a form is submitted and sections are incomplete, the form will not be considered by TREC and will be returned to the applicant for completion.

For further guidance please contact kflorish@tavi-port.nhs.uk

PROJECT DETAILS

Current project title	Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to explore the experiences of teaching assistants of forming relationships with pupils who have Autistic Spectrum Disorder in mainstream primary schools		
Proposed project start date	April 2015	Anticipated project end date	September 2015

APPLICANT DETAILS

Name of Researcher	Allan Willis
Email address	allanwillis@hotmail.co.uk

Contact telephone number	020 8361 7377
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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Will any of the researchers or their institutions receive any other benefits or incentives for taking part in this research over and above their normal salary package or the costs of undertaking the research?

YES ☐ **NO** ☒

If **YES**, please detail below:

Is there any further possibility for conflict of interest? YES ☐ **NO** ☒

If **YES**, please detail below:

FOR ALL APPLICANTS

Has external ethics approval been sought for this research?

(i.e. submission via Integrated Research Application System (IRAS) to the Health Research Authority (HRA) or other external research ethics committee)

YES ☐ **NO** ☒

If **YES**, please supply details below:

COURSE ORGANISING TUTOR

- Does the proposed research as detailed herein have your support to proceed?
YES


Signed

Date

APPLICANT DECLARATION

I confirm that:

- The information contained in this application is, to the best of my knowledge, correct and up to date.
- I have attempted to identify all risks related to the research.
- I acknowledge my obligations and commitment to upholding our University's Code of Practice for ethical research and observing the rights of the participants.
- I am aware that cases of proven misconduct, in line with our University's policies, may result in formal disciplinary proceedings and/or the cancellation of the proposed research.

Applicant	Allan Willis
Signed	
Date	7 th April 2015

FOR RESEARCH DEGREE STUDENT APPLICANTS ONLY

Name and School of Supervisor/Director of Studies	Dr Judith Mortell
Qualification for which research is being undertaken	Professional Doctorate in Child and Educational Psychology

Supervisor/Director of Studies –

- Does the student have the necessary skills to carry out the research?
YES ☐
- Is the participant information sheet, consent form and any other documentation appropriate?
YES ☐
- Are the procedures for recruitment of participants and obtaining informed consent suitable and sufficient?
YES ☐
- Where required, does the researcher have current Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) clearance?
YES ☐

Signed	
Date	7.04.15

DETAILS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

- 1. Provide a brief description of the proposed research, including the requirements of participants. This must be in lay terms and free from technical or discipline specific terminology or jargon. If such terms are required, please ensure they are adequately explained (Do not exceed 500 words)**

I intend to interview 6 Teaching Assistants (TAs) who are the 1:1 support workers for children diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. The children and TAs work in mainstream primary schools, which are in or near a county town. The participants will be required to answer questions in a semi-structured interview format and the questions will be open-ended i.e. there is no right or wrong answer. The participants will be asked about their experiences of working with the children they support and, in particular, about the relationships they have formed with the children they support. The interviews will take place in a room in the school where the TA works be recorded on audiotape and then transcribed by the author. These transcriptions will then analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), an approach specifically designed to analyse personal experiences and the meaning of those experiences to the participants.

- 2. Provide a statement on the aims and significance of the proposed research, including potential impact to knowledge and understanding in the field (where appropriate, indicate the associated hypothesis which will be tested). This should be a clear justification of the proposed research, why it should proceed and a statement on any anticipated benefits to the community. (Do not exceed 700 words)**

The aim of this research is to look at the personal experiences of teaching assistants of forming relationships with the children they support and who have autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). There is a lack of research in this area as previous research has looked at factors relating to TA effectiveness rather than an exploration of the individual TA's ideas, meanings and constructs of their relationships with the ASD children they support. The planned research does not start with a particular hypothesis but will look to analyse the individual experiences of the TAs using IPA. This will provide detail of each of the TA's personal and lived experience, the meaning of the experience to the TAs and how the TAs make sense of that experience. This will add to the current research on how TAs experience working with children who have special educational needs and will provide new information on how those experiences relate specifically to the relationships they form with the ASD children they support. Pupils with ASD have, as a feature of their condition, marked difficulties with forming relationships themselves and so the relationship between them and any adult working with them is likely to be difficult to develop. Whilst areas such as training, relationships with teachers and expertise in ASD strategies has been identified in previous research as being important for TAs supporting pupils with ASD there is little to examine the crucial element of the TA-pupil relationship. Therefore, the outcomes of this research are likely to add to the information available on good practice for TAs when supporting ASD pupils; are likely to help professionals working with ASD pupils including school staff and Educational Psychologists and are likely to give a rich picture of the relationships that develop between TAs and the pupils they support.

For the TAs, school staff, parents of ASD pupils and professionals working with ASD young people this research will provide important information on how relationships between support staff and the pupils develops and the issues that arise when working with pupils who have ASD. This will have a beneficial impact upon the school community and those working in schools with ASD pupils as it will provide a detailed an rich picture of working with ASD pupils, the issues that arise and how relationships develop.

3. Provide an outline of the methodology for the proposed research, including proposed method of data collection, *tasks* assigned to participants of the research and the proposed method and duration of data analysis. If the proposed research makes use of pre-established and generally accepted techniques, please make this clear. (Do not exceed 500 words)

This is a qualitative piece of research where TAs will be interviewed using a semi-structured interview developed in line with IPA guidelines. The TAs will be asked to talk about their experiences of forming relationships with the ASD pupil they are assigned to. The interviews will be recorded and will then be transcribed so the transcriptions can then be analysed. 6 Teaching Assistants will be interviewed and these will be selected against the following criteria:

- They will be Teaching Assistants in a mainstream primary school assigned to support a child who has an identified diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder. The child will have a Statement of Special Educational Needs where 1:1 support from a teaching assistant has been identified in Part 3 of the Statement.
- The sampling will be purposive and the TAs will be a homogenous group within the criteria of selection i.e. they are all TAs supporting ASD pupils with Statements in mainstream schools in one town.

The transcripts will be analysed using IPA, which is an established approach for analysing data relating to participants' experiences. This approach has trustworthiness and credibility in that it is able to show sensitivity to the context of TAs working in schools with ASD pupils; commitment and rigour through allowing the TAs to talk in depth about their experiences; transparency and coherence through an established audit trail at each stage of the analysis and importance and impact will be shown through the voice given to TAs talking about their particular experiences.

The interviews will be in the region of about 1 hour for each participant and transcription of each interview is likely to be time consuming. The coding and analysis of the data will be undertaken over a number of months after the interviews have been transcribed.

PARTICIPANT DETAILS

4. Provide an explanation detailing how you will identify, approach and recruit the participants for the proposed research, including clarification on sample size and location. Please provide justification for the exclusion/inclusion criteria for this study (i.e. who will be allowed to / not allowed to participate) and explain briefly, in lay terms, why this criteria is in place. (Do not exceed 500 words)

Participants will be Teaching Assistants working in mainstream primary schools in and around a large market town. They will be identified through contacting the headteachers of 18 primary schools to identify whether they have TAs who work 1:1 with ASD pupils. I have an existing relationship as their Educational Psychologist with this cluster of primary schools and this might make it harder for the TAs to feel they could decline to participate. I will make it clear to the headteachers and the TAs that my work in the school and with them will not be affected by their choice to participate and that if TAs choose not to take part that this will in no way affect my working relationship with them or the school.

The following are the criteria for inclusion:

- They will be Teaching Assistants in a mainstream primary school assigned to support a child who has an identified diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder.
- The child will have a Statement of Special Educational Needs where 1:1 support from a teaching assistant has been identified in Part 3 of the Statement.
- TAs working with children without a confirmed diagnosis of ASD in their Statement of SEN will be excluded.
- TAs who are not the named 1:1 support for the child will be excluded.

Once a Head teacher has identified potential TAs and given consent for me to approach them I will arrange a meeting with the TAs to discuss the project and their possible involvement in it. This will cover an overview of the project, what they will be required to do and how the information they give will be analysed. In addition they will be given assurances about anonymity, confidentiality and how the data will be kept and stored. Furthermore, they will be told of their right to withdraw at any time and that the researcher will be available for up to 1 hour after the interview should there be any difficulties that arise during the interview. Once a TA has agreed to participate they will be asked to complete a consent form.

The first 6 TAs to agree to be interviewed and who sign consent forms will constitute the research study group.

This research is about the experiences of TAs and the interview schedule has been designed to elicit information about their experiences as opposed to eliciting information about the children they work with. However, over the course of the interview the TAs may refer to the children they are working with. Therefore, before the interview begins, the TAs will be asked not to disclose pupil names but rather just use a pronoun (he or she). If the participants begin to deviate from the subject of interest and begin to discuss the child that they work with the interviewer will guide them back to the subject of interest. Should any names be inadvertently referred to the names will be changed when the interview is transcribed and the recording will then be destroyed. Similarly, if during the interview identifying features of the school or school staff/pupils are revealed, the same process will be applied and any identifying features will be altered.

5. Will the participants be from any of the following groups? (Tick as appropriate)

- ☐ Students or staff of the Trust or the University.
- ☒ Adults (over the age of 18 years with mental capacity to give consent to participate in the research).
- ☐ Children or legal minors (anyone under the age of 16 years)¹
- ☐ Adults who are unconscious, severely ill or have a terminal illness.
- ☐ Adults who may lose mental capacity to consent during the course of the research.
- ☐ Adults in emergency situations.
- ☐ Adults² with mental illness - particularly those detained under the Mental Health Act (1983 & 2007).
- ☐ Participants who may lack capacity to consent to participate in the research under the research requirements of the Mental Capacity Act (2005).
- ☐ Prisoners, where ethical approval may be required from the **National Offender Management Service (NOMS)**.
- ☐ Young Offenders, where ethical approval may be required from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS).
- ☐ Healthy volunteers (in high risk intervention studies).
- ☐ Participants who may be considered to have a pre-existing and potentially dependent³ relationship with the investigator (e.g. those in care homes, students, colleagues, service-users, patients).
- ☐ Other vulnerable groups (see Question 6).
- ☐ Adults who are in custody, custodial care, or for whom a court has assumed responsibility.
- ☐ Participants who are members of the Armed Forces.

¹If the proposed research involves children or adults who meet the Police Act (1997) definition of vulnerability³, any researchers who will have contact with participants must have current Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) clearance.

² 'Adults with a learning or physical disability, a physical or mental illness, or a reduction in physical or mental capacity, and living in a care home or home for people with learning difficulties or receiving care in their own home, or receiving hospital or social care services.' (Police Act, 1997)

³ Proposed research involving participants with whom the investigator or researcher(s) shares a dependent or unequal relationships (e.g. teacher/student, clinical therapist/service-user) may compromise the ability to give informed consent which is free from any form of pressure (real or implied) arising from this relationship. TREC recommends that, wherever practicable, investigators choose participants with whom they have no dependent relationship. Following due scrutiny, if the investigator is confident that the research involving participants in dependent relationships is vital and defensible, TREC will require additional information setting out the case and detailing how risks inherent in the dependent relationship will be managed. TREC will also need to be reassured that refusal to participate will not result in any discrimination or penalty.

6. Will the study involve participants who are vulnerable? YES ☐ NO ☒

For the purposes of research, 'vulnerable' participants may be adults whose ability to protect their own interests are impaired or reduced in comparison to that of the broader population. Vulnerability may arise from the participant's personal characteristics (e.g. mental or physical impairment) or from their social environment, context and/or disadvantage (e.g. socio-economic mobility, educational attainment, resources, substance dependence, displacement or homelessness). Where prospective participants are at high risk of consenting under duress, or as a result of manipulation or coercion, they must also be considered as vulnerable.

Adults lacking mental capacity to consent to participate in research and children are automatically presumed to be vulnerable. Studies involving adults (over the age of 16) who lack mental capacity to consent in research must be submitted to a REC approved for that purpose.

6.1. If YES, what special arrangements are in place to protect vulnerable participants' interests?

If **YES**, the research activity proposed will require a CRB check. (NOTE: information concerning activities which require CRB checks can be found via <http://www.crb.homeoffice.gov.uk/> .

7. Do you propose to make any form of payment or incentive available to participants of the research? YES ☐ NO ☒

If **YES**, please provide details taking into account that any payment or incentive should be representative of reasonable remuneration for participation and may not be of a value that could be coercive or exerting undue influence on potential participants' decision to take part in the research. Wherever possible, remuneration in a monetary form should be avoided and substituted with vouchers, coupons or equivalent. Any payment made to research participants may have benefit or HMRC implications and participants should be alerted to this in the participant information sheet as they may wish to choose to decline payment.

8. What special arrangements are in place for eliciting informed consent from participants who may not adequately understand verbal explanations or written information provided in English; where participants have special communication needs; where participants have limited literacy; or where children are involved in the research? (Do not exceed 200 words)

This is not applicable to this piece of research as all participants will, by the nature of their job, be able to understand verbal and written English.

RISK ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT

9. Does the proposed research involve any of the following? (*Tick as appropriate*)

- ☐ use of a questionnaire, self-completion survey or data-collection instrument (attach copy)
- ☐ use of emails or the internet as a means of data collection
- ☐ use of written or computerised tests
- ☒ interviews (attach interview questions)
- ☐ diaries (attach diary record form)
- ☐ participant observation
- ☐ participant observation (in a non-public place) without their knowledge / covert research
- ☒ audio-recording interviewees or events
- ☐ video-recording interviewees or events
- ☐ access to personal and/or sensitive data (i.e. student, patient, client or service-user data) without the participant's informed consent/for use of these data for research purposes
- ☐ administration of any questions, tasks, investigations, procedures or stimuli which may be experienced by participants as physically or mentally painful, stressful or unpleasant during or after the research process
- ☐ performance of any acts which might diminish the self-esteem of participants or cause them to experience discomfiture, regret or any other adverse emotional or psychological reaction
- ☐ investigation of participants involved in illegal or illicit activities (e.g. use of illegal drugs)
- ☐ procedures that involve the deception of participants
- ☐ administration of any substance or agent
- ☐ use of non-treatment of placebo control conditions
- ☐ participation in a clinical trial

- ☐ research undertaken at an off-campus location (risk assessment attached)
- ☐ research overseas (copy of VCG overseas travel approval attached)

10. Does the proposed research involve any specific or anticipated risks (e.g. physical, psychological, social, legal or economic) to participants that are greater than those encountered in everyday life? YES ☐ NO ☒

If YES, please describe below including details of precautionary measures.

11. Where the procedures involve potential hazards and/or discomfort or distress for participants, please state what previous experience the investigator or researcher(s) have had in conducting this type of research.

I am a qualified Child and Educational Psychologist with 20 years' experience of working with children and families. I completed a thesis for my Masters Degree (1993) where I interviewed participants in a reading recovery programme. In addition I have undertaken a course in Brief Therapy and am level 2 trained in Narrative Therapy and so have experience of working with people in difficulty. In my practice I have come across upset and anxiety on many occasions and I am able to recognise when this is occurring and manage it accordingly. This includes using therapeutic listening skills and non-threatening questions to help reduce any anxiety. Should a TA in this study become overly distressed then the interview would be abandoned and either discontinued or re-arranged dependent on the participant's wishes. I will give the participants information on appropriate help and support in relation to the issues that arose should they wish

it.

This study will not involve working with young people.

12. Provide an explanation of any potential benefits to participants. Please ensure this is framed within the overall contribution of the proposed research to knowledge or practice. (Do not exceed 400 words)

NOTE: Where the proposed research involves students of our University, they should be assured that accepting the offer to participate or choosing to decline will have no impact on their assessments or learning experience. Similarly, it should be made clear to participants who are patients, service-users and/or receiving any form of treatment or medication that they are not invited to participate in the belief that participation in the research will result in some relief or improvement in their condition.

This research may be beneficial to the participant TAs in that they will be provided with an opportunity to talk about their relationships with the pupils they support as well as an opportunity to reflect upon their practice and their work. Furthermore, a feedback session will be offered to all the participants after the data has been analysed and the research completed. This will enable those participants who take part to share their experiences and reflect on their participation in the research.

13. Provide an outline of any measures you have in place in the event of adverse or unexpected outcomes and the potential impact this may have on participants involved in the proposed research. (Do not exceed 300 words)

A potential outcome might be participant distress during interview. I will ensure that participants know they can withdraw should they wish to and that I will be available to them after the interview if there are issues they wish to discuss. Should further meetings be required to discuss these issues they will be arranged with the TA directly. Participants will also be informed of, and signposted to, help or support they can access for any professional or personal issues that arise during their participation in the study.

14. Provide an outline of your debriefing, support and feedback protocol for participants involved in the proposed research. This should include, for example, where participants may feel the need to discuss thoughts or feelings brought about following their participation in the research. This may involve referral to an external support or counseling service, where participation in the research has caused specific issues for participants. Where medical aftercare may be necessary, this should include details of the treatment available to participants. Debriefing may involve the disclosure of further information on the aims of the research, the participant's performance and/or the results of the research. (Do not exceed 500 words)

After each interview the researcher will be available in the event that the TA needs to discuss any issues that have arisen from the interview. Should further discussions be required then a date will be made for this meeting to take place.

Once the research has been completed and written up, a meeting will be offered to all the participants in order to feedback the results of the research and also to allow the participants to reflect on the outcomes and their experience of taking part. Attendance at this session will be voluntary and they will be clearly informed of this when the offer is made.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT AND WITHDRAWAL

15. Have you attached a copy of your participant information sheet (this should be in *plain English*)? Where the research involves non-English speaking participants, please include translated materials. YES ☒ NO ☐

If **NO**, please indicate what alternative arrangements are in place below:

16. Have you attached a copy of your participant consent form (this should be in *plain English*)? Where the research involves non-English speaking participants, please include translated materials.

YES ☒ NO ☐

If **NO**, please indicate what alternative arrangements are in place below:

17. The following is a participant information sheet checklist covering the various points that should be included in this document.

- ☒ Clear identification of the sponsor for the research, the project title, the Researcher or Principal Investigator and other researchers along with relevant contact details.
- ☒ Details of what involvement in the proposed research will require (e.g., participation in interviews, completion of questionnaire, audio/video-recording of events), estimated time commitment and any risks involved.
- ☒ A statement confirming that the research has received formal approval from TREC.
- ☒ If the sample size is small, advice to participants that this may have implications for confidentiality / anonymity.
- ☒ A clear statement that where participants are in a dependent relationship with any of the researchers that participation in the research will have no impact on assessment / treatment / service-use or support.
- ☒ Assurance that involvement in the project is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw consent at any time, and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.
- ☒ Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations.
- ☒ A statement that the data generated in the course of the research will be retained in accordance with the University's Data Protection Policy.
- ☒ Advice that if participants have any concerns about the conduct of the investigator, researcher(s) or any other aspect of this research project, they should contact Louis Taussig, the Trust Quality Assurance Officer ltaussig@tavi-port.nhs.uk
- ☒ Confirmation on any limitations in confidentiality where disclosure of imminent harm to self and/or others may occur.

18. The following is a consent form checklist covering the various points that should be included in this document.

- ☒ University or Trust letterhead or logo.
- ☒ Title of the project (with research degree projects this need not necessarily be the title of the thesis) and names of investigators.
- ☒ Confirmation that the project is research.
- ☒ Confirmation that involvement in the project is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw at any time, or to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.
- ☒ Confirmation of particular requirements of participants, including for example whether interviews are to be audio-/video-recorded, whether anonymised quotes will be used in

publications advice of legal limitations to data confidentiality.

- ☒ If the sample size is small, confirmation that this may have implications for anonymity any other relevant information.
- ☒ The proposed method of publication or dissemination of the research findings.
- ☒ Details of any external contractors or partner institutions involved in the research.
- ☒ Details of any funding bodies or research councils supporting the research.
- ☒ Confirmation on any limitations in confidentiality where disclosure of imminent harm to self and/or others may occur.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

19. Below is a checklist covering key points relating to the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Please indicate where relevant to the proposed research.

- ☐ Participants will be completely anonymised and their identity will not be known by the investigator or researcher(s) (i.e. the participants are part of an anonymous randomised sample and return responses with no form of personal identification)?
- ☐ The responses are anonymised or are an anonymised sample (i.e. a permanent process of coding has been carried out whereby direct and indirect identifiers have been removed from data and replaced by a code, with no record retained of how the code relates to the identifiers).
- ☒ The samples and data are de-identified (i.e. direct and indirect identifiers have been removed and replaced by a code. The investigator or researchers are able to link the code to the original identifiers and isolate the participant to whom the sample or data relates).
- ☐ Participants have the option of being identified in a publication that will arise from the research.
- ☐ Participants will be pseudo-anonymised in a publication that will arise from the research. (i.e. the researcher will endeavour to remove or alter details that would identify the participant.)
- ☐ The proposed research will make use of personal sensitive data.
- ☐ Participants consent to be identified in the study and subsequent dissemination of research findings and/or publication.

20. Participants must be made aware that the confidentiality of the information they provide is subject to legal limitations in data confidentiality (i.e. the data may be subject to a subpoena, a freedom of information request or mandated reporting by some professions). This only applies to named or de-identified data. If your participants are named or de-identified, please confirm that you will specifically state these limitations.

YES ☒ NO ☐

If NO, please indicate why this is the case below:

NOTE: WHERE THE PROPOSED RESEARCH INVOLVES A SMALL SAMPLE OR FOCUS GROUP, PARTICIPANTS SHOULD BE ADVISED THAT THERE WILL BE DISTINCT LIMITATIONS IN THE LEVEL OF ANONYMITY THEY CAN BE AFFORDED.

DATA ACCESS, SECURITY AND MANAGEMENT

21. Will the Researcher/Principal Investigator be responsible for the security of all data collected in connection with the proposed research? YES ☒ NO ☐

If NO, please indicate what alternative arrangements are in place below:

22. In line with the 5th principle of the Data Protection Act (1998), which states that personal data shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose or those purposes for which it was collected; please state how long data will be retained for.

☐ 1-2 years ☐ 3-5 years ☒ 6-10 years ☐ 10+ years

NOTE: Research Councils UK (RCUK) guidance currently states that data should normally be preserved and accessible for 10 years, but for projects of clinical or major social, environmental or heritage importance, for 20 years or longer.

(<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/reviews/grc/grcpoldraft.pdf>)

23. Below is a checklist which relates to the management, storage and secure destruction of data for the purposes of the proposed research. Please indicate where relevant to your proposed arrangements.

☒ Research data, codes and all identifying information to be kept in separate locked filing cabinets.

☐ Access to computer files to be available to research team by password only.

☐ Access to computer files to be available to individuals outside the research team by password only (See **23.1**).

☐ Research data will be encrypted and transferred electronically within the European Economic Area (EEA).

☐ Research data will be encrypted and transferred electronically outside of the European Economic Area (EEA). (See **23.2**).

NOTE: Transfer of research data via third party commercial file sharing services, such as Google Docs and YouSendIt are not necessarily secure or permanent. These systems may also be located overseas and not covered by UK law. If the system is located outside the European Economic Area (EEA) or territories deemed to have sufficient standards of data protection, transfer may also breach the Data Protection Act (1998).

☐ Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, e-mails or telephone numbers.

☒ Use of personal data in the form of audio or video recordings.

☐ Primary data gathered on encrypted mobile devices (i.e. laptops). **NOTE:** This should be transferred to secure UEL servers at the first opportunity.

☒ All electronic data will undergo secure disposal.

NOTE: For hard drives and magnetic storage devices (HDD or SSD), deleting files does not permanently erase the data on most systems, but only deletes the reference to the file. Files can be restored when deleted in this way. Research files must be overwritten to ensure they are completely irretrievable. Software is available for the secure erasing of files from hard drives which meet recognised standards to securely scramble sensitive data. Examples of this software are BC Wipe, Wipe File, DeleteOnClick and Eraser for Windows platforms. Mac users can use the standard 'secure empty trash' option; an alternative is Permanent eraser software.

☒ All hardcopy data will undergo secure disposal.

NOTE: For shredding research data stored in hardcopy (i.e. paper), adopting DIN 3 ensures files are cut into 2mm strips or confetti like cross-cut particles of 4x40mm. The UK government requires a minimum standard of DIN 4 for its material, which ensures cross cut particles of at least 2x15mm.

23.1. Please provide details of individuals outside the research team who will be given password protected access to encrypted data for the proposed research.

23.2. Please provide details on the regions and territories where research data will be electronically transferred that are external to the European Economic Area (EEA).

OVERSEAS TRAVEL FOR RESEARCH

24. Does the proposed research involve travel outside of the UK? YES ☐ NO ☒

24.1. Have you consulted the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website for guidance/travel advice? <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/> YES ☐ NO ☐

24.2. If you are a non-UK national, have you sought travel advice/guidance from the Foreign Office (or equivalent body) of your country? YES ☐ NO ☐ NOT APPLICABLE ☐

24.3. Have you completed the overseas travel approval process and enclosed a copy of the document with this application? (For UEL students and staff only) YES ☐ NO ☐

Details on this process are available here <http://www.uel.ac.uk/ga/research/fieldwork.htm>

24.4. Is the research covered by your University's insurance and indemnity provision? YES ☐ NO ☐

NOTE: Where research is undertaken by UEL students and staff at an off-campus location within the UK or overseas, the Risk Assessment policy must be consulted:

http://dl-cfs-01.uel.ac.uk/hrservices/documents/hshandbook/risk_assess_policy.pdf.

For UEL students and staff conducting research where UEL is the sponsor, the Dean of School or Director of Service has overall responsibility for risk assessment regarding their health and safety.

24.5. Please evidence how compliance with all local research ethics and research governance requirements have been assessed for the country(ies) in which the research is taking place.

24.6. Will this research be financially supported by the United States Department of Health and Human Services or any of its divisions, agencies or programs? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>

PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

<p>25. How will the results of the research be reported and disseminated? (<i>Select all that apply</i>)</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Peer reviewed journal</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Conference presentation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Internal report</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dissertation/Thesis</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other publication</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Written feedback to research participants</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Presentation to participants or relevant community groups</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify below)</p>

OTHER ETHICAL ISSUES

<p>26. Are there any other ethical issues that have not been addressed which you would wish to bring to the attention of Tavistock Research Ethics Committee (TREC)?</p>

CHECKLIST FOR ATTACHED DOCUMENTS

27. Please check that the following documents are attached to your application.

- ☐ Recruitment advertisement
- ☒ Participant information sheets (including easy-read where relevant)
- ☒ Consent forms (including easy-read where relevant)
- ☐ Assent form for children (where relevant)
- ☐ Evidence of any external approvals needed
- ☐ Questionnaire
- ☒ Interview Schedule or topic guide
- ☐ Risk assessment (where applicable)
- ☐ Overseas travel approval (where applicable)

27.1. Where it is not possible to attach the above materials, please provide an explanation below.

APPENDIX 3

LETTER OF APPROVAL FROM ETHICS COMMITTEE

Trust Logo Inserted

Quality Assurance & Enhancement
Directorate of Education & Training
Tavistock Centre
120 Belsize Lane
London
NW3 5BA
Tel: 020 8938 2548
Fax: 020 7447 3837
www.tavi-port.org

Allan Willis
37 Church Crescent
Whetstone London
N20 0JR
2015

23rd June

Re: Research Ethics Application

Title: "Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to explore the experiences of teaching assistants of forming relationships with pupils who have Autistic Spectrum Disorder in mainstream primary schools"

Dear Allan,

I am pleased to inform you that subject to formal ratification by the Trust Research Ethics Committee your application has been approved. This means you can proceed with your research.

If you have any further questions or require any clarification do not hesitate to contact me.

I am copying this communication to your supervisor.

May I take this opportunity of wishing you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Louis Taussig". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Louis Taussig Secretary to the Trust Research Ethics Committee

Cc Judith Mortell

APPENDIX 4

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Information Sheet

Research Title

Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to explore the experiences of teaching assistants of forming relationships with pupils who have Autistic Spectrum Disorder in mainstream primary schools.

Who is doing the research?

My name is Allan Willis and I am studying for a Doctorate qualification in Educational Psychology. I am doing this piece of research as part of this course.

Are you interested in taking part in this research?

I would very much like you to take part in my research study. This sheet provides all of the relevant information for you about this study, such as why it is being done and what you would need to do as part of it. Please spend time reading it through and then decide whether or not you would like to take part.

What is the aim of this research?

I am interested in the experiences of Teaching Assistants who work with children who have Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and, in particular, the relationships that they develop with them.

Who has given permission for this research?

The head teacher at the school you work in has given permission for this research to take place if you are happy to be involved. The training institution I am studying at is the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust and they have given me ethical approval to do this piece of research.

Who can take part in this research?

I am looking for teaching assistants who support young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders in mainstream primary schools. The teaching assistants needed should be the identified 1:1 support workers for the young people in question.

Do you have to take part?

You do not have to take part and it is up to you to decide if you want to. You are free at any time to stop your involvement in the research and you do not have to give a reason for this. This will not affect any work you do in the school either now or in the future.

What will you need to do?

You will be invited to meet with me in your school at a time convenient to you. I will explain what we are going to do at the beginning of the meeting and then I will ask you about your experiences of working with the young person you support. This meeting will last about one hour and I will record it onto an audiotape. I am expecting that we will only need to meet once but it might be the case that I need to ask you more about your experiences. If that is the case then we will arrange another meeting at a time convenient to you. The recordings will be stored in a locked box at my home and when transcribed the data will be protected on my computer using a password. You can ask for the recordings to be stopped or deleted at any time. The recordings will be deleted once they have been typed up.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There isn't much research in this area and so this will be a new and hopefully interesting study into how teaching assistants experience the development of their relationships with young people who have ASD. Therefore, your views and ideas are really important in helping to understand more about teaching assistants and the support they give to ASD pupils.

What will happen to the findings from the research?

The findings will be typed up and will make up my thesis, which will be part of my Educational Psychology Doctorate qualification. I would like to tell you about the findings of the research if you would like. We can talk about the ways in which you would like to know about the findings such as me explaining them to you in person or me sending them to you. I would also like to arrange a meeting with all of the TAs who take part in the study so that you can have the chance to talk about the research and its findings together.

What will happen if you don't want to carry on with this research?

You can change your mind at any time and if you want to stop, you can leave at any time without explaining why. Any research data collected before your withdrawal may still be used, unless you request that it is destroyed. If it has reached the point that it has been anonymised to the point that I can no longer retrieve your data I will not be able to remove your data and it will not be traceable to anyone, including me.

Will your taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes. I will follow ethical and legal practice and all information about you will be handled in confidence. All information that is collected will be kept strictly confidential. All records related to your participation in this research study will be handled and stored appropriately. Your identity on these records will be indicated by a pseudonym rather than by your name. The data will be kept for a minimum

of 5 years. Data collected during the study will be stored and used in compliance with the UK Data Protection Act (1998).

Are there times when your data cannot be kept confidential?

If you tell me something that makes me concerned about the safety of you or someone else then I might have to share that information with others in order to keep you or someone else safe. However, I would always aim to discuss this with you first when possible. Because I am meeting with 6 TAs, there is a chance that you may recognise some of the things you said in my research. To protect your identity, your name will be a pseudonym so that others are less likely to be able to recognise you and what you said.

Further information and contact details

If you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of the research, please contact me:

Email: allanwillis@hotmail.co.uk

Telephone: 020 8361 7377

If you have any concerns about the research then you can contact Louis Taussig who works for the Tavistock and Portman research department.

His contact details are:

Email: ltaussig@tavi-port.nhs.uk

Telephone: 020 7435 7111

APPENDIX 5

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Trust Logo inserted

Participant Consent Form

Research Project Title

Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to explore the experiences of teaching assistants of forming relationships with pupils who have Autistic Spectrum Disorder in mainstream primary schools.

Please initial the statements below if you agree with them:

Initial here

1. I have read and understood the information sheet and have had the chance to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.
3. I agree for my interviews to be recorded on audiotape.
4. I understand that my data will be anonymised so that I cannot be linked to their data.
5. I understand that my interviews will be used for this research and cannot be accessed for any other purposes.
6. I understand that the findings from this research will be published and available for the public to read.

7. I am willing to participate in this research.

Your name..... Signed..... Date...../...../.....

Researcher name...Allan Willis . Signed..... Date...../...../.....

Researcher

Allan Willis

Child and Educational Psychologist

37, Church Crescent, Whetstone N20 0JR

020 8361 7377

allanwillis@hotmail.co.uk

Thank you for your help.

APPENDIX 6

SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

Research Project Title

Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to explore the experiences of teaching assistants of forming relationships with pupils who have Autistic Spectrum Disorder in mainstream primary schools.

Questions

1. Tell me about the 1:1 support you offer?

Prompts: in lessons? at breaktime? at lunchtime?

2. Tell me about the relationships you have formed during this work?

Prompts: When do you get on well? / not so well?

3. What sense do you make of these relationships?

Prompts: What does it mean to you? How do you feel about the relationship?

APPENDIX 7

RESEARCH PROTOCOL

ALLAN WILLIS

Research Protocol for

Professional Doctorate in Child and Educational Psychology (M5) DEdChPsych

Personal Tutor: Dr Judith Mortell

Date: 24th October 2014

Assignment length: 3445 words

TITLE

Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to explore the experiences of teaching assistants of forming relationships with pupils who have Autistic Spectrum Disorder in mainstream primary schools.

2. INTRODUCTION

There are increasing numbers of children with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) being educated within mainstream schools and Teaching Assistants (TAs) are employed to support them both directly and indirectly. This research will focus on the experiences of teaching assistants of forming relationships with ASD pupils in mainstream primary schools. Those experiences will be analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) in order to explore how the participants reflect on their relationships with ASD pupils, how they make sense of those experiences and the meanings that those experiences hold for them. This research adds a new dimension to existing research, which currently has focussed on evaluating teaching assistant effectiveness in mainstream schools or has looked at the experiences of teachers or teaching assistants in relation to evaluating the factors that are important for effective support of ASD pupils in mainstream schools.

Teaching assistants play an increasingly important role in schools and supporting pupils with SEN. Pupils with ASD form a significant percentage of SEN pupils in mainstream schools and offer particular challenges to those working with them and so it is relevant for research to look to explore how teaching assistants make sense of this challenging work. In particular ASD pupils have difficulties in forming relationships and so the relationship between TAs and ASD pupils is potentially significant. Educational Psychologists often interview TAs as part of assessments of ASD pupils and so this

research is relevant and worthwhile as it will contribute to the TAs' work with ASD in primary schools as well as EP practice when trying to understand the relationship that develops between TAs and the pupils they support.

3. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

3.1 Background

ASD pupils in mainstream schools

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people and the world around them (National Autistic Society, 2014). A key feature is a deficit in forming social relationships at an age-appropriate level. Recent studies of prevalence indicate a median worldwide incidence of 62/10,000 (Elsabbagh et al, 2012) with a UK prevalence of 1.1% of the population (Baird G. et al., 2006; Brugha et al 2009; Brugha et al, 2012). Increasing numbers of ASD pupils are being educated within mainstream school settings, which is a response to the inclusion policy initially set out in Excellence for All Children (DfEE, 2007). Furthermore, Humphrey and Lewis (2008) found that pupils on the autistic spectrum are at a substantially greater risk of being excluded from school compared with typically developing peers. ASD pupils are also at greater risk of peer group difficulties, for example in relation to bullying (Humphrey and Symes, 2010) and rejection / reduced acceptance (Symes and Humphrey, 2010) compared with other pupils in mainstream settings.

Teaching assistants and their role and effectiveness in mainstream schools

Typically, in mainstream schools pupils with special educational needs including ASD are supported by Teaching Assistants either as dedicated 1:1 support for an individual pupil through provision set out in a Statement of Special Educational Needs or through more general classroom support at School Action / Action Plus. Studies have shown that teachers regard the role of TAs as critical to the successful inclusion of pupils with ASD (Rose, 2001) and that TAs have a more positive attitude towards the pupils than teachers, who can report feeling tensions towards ASD pupils (Emam and Farrell, 2009). However, it is also the case that the effectiveness of TA support of this type has been questioned with some research reporting little and inconsistent impact on overall attainment scores (Howes, 2003) and with other studies reporting that the more TA support a child receives the less progress they make (Blatchford et al, 2009a; Farrell et al, 2010). There are also studies that report that increased TA contact may lead to pupils being socially isolated (Alston and Kilham, 2004; McVittie, 2005). The factors of importance that impact upon effective TA support have been identified as *deployment, training and relationships with teachers* (Blatchford et al, 2009a) and *school factors* such as inclusive school culture and teacher training (Symes and Humphrey, 2011). When TAs who supported ASD pupils in mainstream schools were interviewed, thematic analysis identified positive attitudes towards pupils with SEN, school leadership support for inclusion, collaboration and respect as components of an inclusive school culture (Symes and Humphrey, 2011). Furthermore, the TAs reported that the factors they perceived as impacting upon their ability to effectively include pupils with ASD as *access to expertise, communication within school and teaching staff awareness of ASD*.

Whilst these pieces of research are valuable in looking at the systems in schools that appear to be important for effective inclusion of ASD pupils it remains that there is little to tell us about how the TAs feel about their relationships with the ASD pupils they

support, particularly as these relationships are seen to be important factors in successful inclusion (Emam and Farrell, 2009). This is particularly relevant given that the role of TAs in schools is at the forefront of support for ASD pupils in mainstream schools. These studies do vary in their robustness when validity criteria are applied to them (Yardley, 2008). For example, Symes and Humphrey (2011) looked at TA experiences supporting ASD pupils in 4 secondary schools and used thematic analysis to analyse the data obtained. This analysis didn't recognise that some TAs worked with one pupil at a time whilst others worked with more than one pupil; some had prior experience of working with ASD pupils whilst others had none and whilst most were employed by the school others came via an outside agency. The use of thematic analysis in this research is certainly appropriate but the analysis focused mostly at the visible / obvious level and lacked interpretation of meaning. There is also the concern in this research that the interview format was very narrow in restricting participants to discussing issues relating to deployment, training and teacher relationships and that a strong hypothesis had already been generated before the interviews took place, which potentially narrowed the usefulness of the research. That said the research did show a degree of commitment and rigour through the analysis of the data and showed a clear train of argument from the data to the conclusions. The research from Blatchford et al (2009a), as another example, sought to look at the effect of support staff on pupil engagement and individual attention using a rather complex analysis of students and TAs' behaviour in blocks of 10-second intervals. The selection of participants and the quantitative analysis of the data are problematic as there are many variables that could have affected the outcome of these observations.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

IPA is a qualitative approach concerned with analysing personal experiences, the meaning of experience to participants and how participants make sense of that experience (Smith, 2011). It has its roots in phenomenological psychology and hermeneutics and seeks to try and get as close as is possible to the direct experiences of participants. Smith (2011) conducted a review of 293 IPA studies noting that the largest area of research covered within IPA was illness experience closely followed by psychological distress and experience of carers. Of the 51 papers Smith considered for final review 27% were considered Good, 55% Acceptable and 18% Unacceptable. This indicates the wide variation in quality of IPA research but this review took place only from 1996 to 2008 and so is limited in that respect, especially as the number of IPA research papers published has been increasing each year since 1996 (Smith, 2011)

IPA has been used to research areas within education more recently than 2008 and, in relation to ASD, has been used to look at the experiences of ASD pupils themselves. Hill (2014) looked at the experiences of 6 ASD pupils in two mainstream secondary schools and noted that the themes that emerged for the group were sanctuary, anxiety and young people as active agents. Petalas et al (2013) looked at the sibling relationships of 12 adolescents with ASD and noted that the overwhelming sense from participants was of typical sibling relationships. Humphrey and Lewis (2008) looked at the experiences of 20 pupils with Asperger Syndrome from 4 secondary schools and noted that a central theme was how participants constructed their understanding of what their AS meant to them, which was often characterized by negative perceptions of their differences, such as being 'retarded' or having a 'bad brain'. Whilst these pieces of research throw valuable light onto how ASD pupils perceive themselves and their ASD, there remains a singular lack of research into how TAs perceive their role in working with ASD pupils and the relationships they form with them. It is also the case that the vast majority of this research

is with pupils with ASD in secondary schools and little on the views of primary aged ASD pupils. Furthermore, there is also a variation in robustness of these studies as Smith (2011) noted in his review of IPA research. For example, Hill (2014) uses IPA to study the experiences of ASD youngsters by getting them to take photos of aspects of school life that was important to them and using these as discussion cues. This is an unusual way to use IPA especially as each participant was met on 4 occasions. Given that the data analysis focuses then on themes it is questionable as to whether this is actually an IPA study at all but rather a thematic analysis. In the Humphrey and Lewis study (2008) IPA is used with 20 participants, which is very large sample for an IPA study and dilutes the detail of the individual experiences in the process.

3.2 Research purpose

The purpose of this research is to look at the experiences of TAs of forming relationships with ASD pupils in mainstream primary schools. There is a paucity of research specifically looking at such TA experiences as previous research has looked more systemically at the factors in schools that influence TA effectiveness rather than an exploration of the individual TA's ideas, meanings and constructs of their relationships with the ASD pupils they support. The theoretical focus of this research is phenomenological in that it will seek to look at the experiences of the Teaching Assistants and to identify the views, ideas and meanings each TA has of their relationships with pupils who have ASD. The research does not start with a particular hypothesis but will seek to analyse the TA's experiences using the qualitative approach of IPA. This will provide a detailed examination of each TA's 'personal lived experience, the meaning of experience to the participants and how participants make sense of that experience' (Smith, 2011). IPA, when undertaken properly, is a trustworthy and credible

approach for analysing people's experiences and, according to Smith et al (2009) meets the criteria set out by Yardley (2000) for assessing the quality of qualitative research through sensitivity to context; commitment and rigour; transparency and coherence; and impact and importance.

This is primarily a piece of exploratory research but there is an emancipatory element in that the TAs will have the opportunity to reflect on their relationships with the pupils they are supporting and have the opportunity to reflect back to the other TAs and the researcher when the findings are disseminated as these reflections could potentially result in change in the TAs practice.

Local context

The research will use TAs based in a cluster of mainstream primary schools in and around a busy town within a large County local authority. This authority has 885 pupils with Statements where ASD is the main diagnostic category.

This research is worthwhile for a number of reasons. Firstly, it adds to the current research on the role of TAs working with ASD pupils in mainstream schools and potentially provide new information on the relationships they form with these pupils. Secondly, it will provide the TAs with an opportunity to reflect upon their relationships with the pupils they support and so will have an impact upon their jobs. Finally, it will provide valuable information for professionals such as Educational Psychologists working with and assessing ASD pupils about the role TAs play in their support.

4. RESEARCH QUESTION

Primary research question: What are the TAs' experiences of forming relationships with the ASD pupils they support in mainstream primary schools?

Sub questions: What sense do TAs make of their relationships with these pupils?

What meanings do TAs attribute to these relationships?

5. PLAN OF WORK

Orientation - The orientation of this research is phenomenological within the Constructivist epidemiology. It focuses on the individual experiences of Teaching Assistants, the sense they make of these experiences and the meanings they attribute to them.

Purpose - The purpose of the research is exploratory in that it seeks to explore the meanings and sense the TAs have of their work. It does not seek to test a hypothesis but to explore the experiences in rich detail and analyse these experiences for the meanings TAs associate with these experiences. The research is also emancipatory as it there will be an opportunity for the TAs to reflect on the findings of this research when it is disseminated and this could potentially empower them in their work.

Research Strategy and technique - The research strategy is qualitative where TAs will be interviewed using a semi-structured interview developed in line with IPA guidelines (Smith et al, 2009). The TAs will be asked to talk about their experiences of forming relationships with the ASD pupil they are assigned to. The interviews will be recorded

and will then be transcribed so the transcriptions can then be analysed. 6 Teaching Assistants will be interviewed and these will be selected against the following criteria:

- They will be Teaching Assistants in a mainstream primary school assigned to support a child who has an identified diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder. The child will have a Statement of Special Educational Needs where 1:1 support from a teaching assistant has been identified in Part 3 of the Statement.
- The sampling will be purposive and the TAs will be a homogenous group within the criteria of selection i.e. they are all TAs supporting ASD pupils with Statements in mainstream schools in one town.

The transcripts will be analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

Validity issues - The Validity of this research depends upon its trustworthiness and credibility. The research will use 6 TAs as this is deemed to be a big enough sample size to elicit the detail and diversity of data required but also manageable in terms of analysis. *Trustworthiness and credibility* – Yardley (2008) sets out guidelines for ensuring validity in IPA research. The *sensitivity to context* is in the nature of the voice given to each of the participants and that the data analysed will reflect their lived experience as TAs working with ASD pupils. *Commitment and rigour* will be ensured by the nature of the semi-structured interview, which will allow them to talk in depth about their experiences and allow detail to emerge. *Transparency and coherence* will be ensured through an audit trail at each stage of the analysis and the coding of themes that emerges at each stage. The write up will demonstrate coherence to the study. *Importance and Impact* will be demonstrated through giving the voice to the TAs about their lived experience and the themes that emerge from these experience will contribute to our knowledge of what it is like to work with ASD pupils in primary

schools. Understanding more about these experiences will help develop both the practice of those TAs in the study as well as informing and developing practice in the schools the TAs work in. Furthermore, the wider contribution to the role of TAs working with ASD pupils in primary schools will add to the existing research in this area.

Phenomenological research is based upon experience but recognises that ‘meaning is first constructed jointly by participant and researcher during data collection’ (Smith et al, 2009). In that sense participant and researcher error and bias is factored in to the research design as it accommodates for a dynamic process as the research ‘is both dependent on, and complicated by, the researcher’s own conceptions, which are required in order to make sense of that other personal world through a process of interpretative activity’ (Smith, 1996). That said the researcher needs to be mindful of the context in which TAs are being asked to talk about their experiences of working in schools and that they might feel uncomfortable about certain aspects of it, for example, offering any criticisms of the either the child or other staff members. The researcher will need to ensure that the participants feel comfortable in this context and that the questions are genuinely open and non-threatening i.e. the TA is not being judged against any particular criteria.

6. Ethical Issues

In this research the data is collected from TAs working in mainstream schools so permission will need to be granted by the Headteacher of those schools and the TAs will need to give informed consent. All names will be anonymised i.e. that of the TAs, the schools they are in and the pupils they are working with. As I am an independent Educational Psychologist there is no requirement to get permission from the local

authority but appropriate professional indemnity insurance is required and in place.

Should any participant withdraw from the research then the information pertaining to them will be destroyed. All participants will be guaranteed anonymity as no name will be used and no school identified. Risk factors in this research are in ensuring that the TAs experiences remain confidential and so any issues that arise from their interviews will not be traceable to them. The TAs will not be coerced in any way and it will be made explicit that their participation has no effect on services being provided to the schools. Clear explanations of the scope of the research will be given to each participant. All data will be stored on memory sticks or computer hard drives and this data will be protected through encryption on the drives with a password required to access. If participants feel distressed this will be followed up with the opportunity to discuss the issues that have arisen. The research questions will be open ended and the interviews semi-structured.

7. Relevance and Impact of research

This research is important because it provides a new dimension to the existing research, by looking at the meanings that TAs attribute to forming relationships with ASD pupils in mainstream schools. Previous research has looked at teachers' experiences and noted the issues for them in working with ASD pupils. Pupils' experiences have highlighted their feelings of being autistic and how they are perceived in school. Work with TAs has focussed on the factors relating to their effectiveness and ability to include ASD pupils into mainstream schools. IPA was used in only one of these pieces of research and this was with pupils who have ASD. There has been no work on looking at the experiences of TAs in and around the relationships they form with the pupils they support. This relationship is potentially important when looking at successful inclusion in mainstream schools. Therefore, this will add to the base of knowledge about TA work in mainstream schools and working with ASD pupils in mainstream schools. The outcomes of this

research will have applications beyond the TAs interviewed and the schools they work in. It will add to the knowledge about how TAs experience their work and the challenges they face when doing so. This will be useful for professionals in education who work with ASD pupils, TA training and to inform the body of work on inclusion of ASD pupils in mainstream schools.

This research will be disseminated to the schools involved through, initially, a meeting with the TAs together and then a feedback session to staff in the schools the TAs work in. The research thesis to be made available to them once it is finalised, approved and published.

8. Feasibility and Resource Utilisation

Expected Timescale	Tasks to be undertaken	Planned Completion date
April-September 2014	Preliminary literature search	September 2014
August-October 2014	Research protocol write up and submission	October 2014
October-November 2014	Ethical submission	November / December 2014
January-February 2015	Letters to schools inviting participant involvement. Seek informed consent	February 2015
February-March 2015	Finalise Participants and consent Further literature search	March 2015
March-May 2015	Undertake interviews with participants	May 2015
May-July 2015	Transcribe interviews	July 2015
August-October 2015	Analyse data using IPA	October 2015
October 2015-March 2016	Write up to draft Feedback to TAs and Schools	March 2016
March – May 2016	Finalise draft	May 2016

APPENDIX 8

TABLE OF EMERGENT THEMES AND FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE

EMERGENT THEMES	Anna	Beth	Clare	Dena	Emma	Frances
Trust in TA	6	5		11	1	1
Trust in others	1					
Trust in the relationship	3			1		
Safety	7	2				
Trust in conveying feelings	3	1		2		
TA position – mediator	8	12	5	6	3	7
TA position – teacher	3	3		2	3	
TA position- parent	4	4				
Special relationship	4	5		3	3	
Empathy	1	3		1		
Attachment	2	9				
Building a relationship	1			5		1
Togetherness /teamwork	9	1		1	1	
Detachment	3	5	5	3	5	4
Conflict/hardship	3	2	5	1		4
Child's Difficulties with communication	3	2			3	2
Anxiety of child	3	1		4		
Child's difficulties with connecting emotionally	2	1	4	1	2	8
Child's difficulties socially	3	6	1			2
Child's difficulties with behaviour	2	2	3	1		1
Feeling pride in Child's progress	4	3		1	3	1
Feeling pride in child's emotional connection	6	3	2	8	7	1
Feeling frustration at lack of progress		3	6			2
Feeling frustration at lack of		1	7			12

emotional connection						
Feeling frustration at lack of support in school						6
Anxiety about being good enough		1	1			8
Child fitting in	2	1			1	
Child being different from others	1					

APPENDIX 9

SUBORDINATE AND SUPERORDINATE THEMES

These themes were obtained from analysis of the emergent themes and their frequency of occurrence in the TA data.

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Attachment	Trust Bond between the child and TA Special or unique nature of the relationship Challenges in the relationship Detachment
TA position	Mediator Teacher Parent
Child's Difficulties	Communicating and understanding feelings and emotions Social interaction Behaviour
Personal and Professional Satisfaction	Feelings around the child's achievements and progress Feelings around the child making emotional connections Feelings around the TA's ability and experience Feelings around support and training

APPENDIX 10 – INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Transcription Coding

Descriptive comments that focussed on describing the content of what the TAs said. This was noted in normal text.

Linguistic comments that focussed on exploring the specific use of language by the TAs. This was noted in italic text.

Conceptual comments that focussed on interpretations of the language being used by the TAs. These were noted in underlined text.

Transcript 1 – ‘Anna’ supporting child ‘A’

Transcript 2 – ‘Beth’ supporting child ‘B’

Transcript 3 – ‘Clare’ supporting child ‘C’

Transcript 4 – ‘Dena’ supporting child ‘D’

Transcript 5 – ‘Emma’ supporting child ‘E’

Transcript 6 – ‘Frances’ supporting child ‘F’

Initial Themes	Original transcript	Exploratory Comments
<p>His anxiety</p>	<p>Researcher: So, tell me a bit about the one to one support you offer with A, just give me some idea of what it is you do.</p> <p>ANNA: Right well I am full time support for A, because A has 31.5 hours, he has quite specific needs, he has anxiety so obviously treating his anxiety is one of the most important things because if we are able to control or help him with his anxiety, then he is relaxed and he is able to learn and that is obviously very important for A. Because last year he was having quite a lot of problems and his level went down, so this year we have focused a lot on his anxiety.</p>	<p>Describes his anxiety and need to control it.</p> <p><i>The language used gets straight to the point – here’s a problem anxiety and we need to solve it.</i></p> <p><i>Importance of being relaxed to learn</i></p> <p><i>Use of ‘obviously’ twice and her voice onto A as important for him. <u>She feels the need to talk for him</u></i></p> <p><u>Solving his problems</u></p>
<p>20</p>	<p>So he is a lovely little boy, absolutely delightful, very good sense of humour but concentration span, again, is very very limited, constantly having to refocus him on teaching time when the teacher is talking. He finds it very</p>	<p>Personality description</p> <p><i>Use of very very and factual, direct language</i></p>

<p>30</p> <p>40</p>	<p>difficult to stay focused on that, just reminding him all the time to give good eye contact, looking at the teacher, making sure he is positioned well in the classroom so he can see the teacher. Constantly reminding him, have you understood A, do you understand what he is saying and keeping it very very low key so it is not so noticeable to the other children or that it is disrupting any of the lessons. So that is the most important time is to keeping him focussed on the lesson. Once we have got through that time, the actual teaching time, he is very good at actually getting on with the work. As long as he has understood everything he is quite good at getting on with the work.</p> <p>He is very easily distracted if it is something he does not really want to do, he is quite determined when it comes to things that he does not want to do, like music, singing, he will try and find everything possible to get out</p>	<p><u>Needing to be there for him. What would he be without her?</u></p> <p><i>Making sure he is positioned</i></p> <p><i>Constantly reminding him</i></p> <p>Description of the challenges</p> <p><i>Use of ‘we’ – this is a joint effort of getting through</i></p> <p><u>Barriers that need to be overcome – them against the world?</u></p> <p><u>Without her would he get on?</u></p> <p><u>He has these difficulties and I can sort them out for him? Or help him to sort them out?</u></p> <p>He is controlling what he does - at other times he responds to things around him – distracted etc.</p>
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<p>50</p>	<p>of that particular thing. Like, I need to do touch typing, I need to go to the toilet, so he can be very distracted with other things to get out of the things he does not like to do.</p> <p>Researcher: And what about playtimes? What would be the support there?</p> <p>ANNA: I go out with him every break time and half of the lunch time. He has support at the beginning of lunch and I do the end of lunch time with him. When he first goes out on the playground he just runs around. He is very, in his own little world at that time, he will talk and just speak to himself about things, games that he has played, he will fling his arms around and his hands and he will prance about the playground. He normally does that for five or 10 minutes and then he will approach someone and ask them if he can play. He used to find that very difficult, but had no idea how to</p>	<p><i>Use of the word 'need' – who needs whom?</i></p> <p>Uses his voice – connects with him closely</p> <p>Description of him at play – letting himself go...this is what he is like without others around him.</p>
<p>60</p> <p>70</p>	<p></p>	<p><u>The idea of his freedom at play when left to himself then 'back to the real world' of asking to play</u></p>

80	<p>approach somebody properly. He would just barge in on the game and try and take over the game.</p> <p>But with lots of work that we have done through socially speaking, I do a socially speaking group with him, where we do lots of roleplay and that has helped an awful lot for A to understand when it is appropriate to and how to approach people and how to ask about rules of the games, because A found that very difficult during a game. He did not understand the rules so he would become quite aggressive with the other children, “I don’t understand,” so making it quite clear that he would understand the rules before the game.</p>	<p><i>‘we have done’ – a collaboration</i></p> <p>Left to himself he struggles – doesn’t understand</p> <p><i>Not understanding – she helps him to understand</i></p>
90	<p>And he is able to do that, he is able to ask those rules and the children are very good with him like that, to help him. So, socially speaking it has been a good thing.</p> <p>Researcher: And in particular, I want</p>	<p>This is what has helped him – made him better?</p>

<p>100</p> <p>Trust in her</p> <p>Safety – that he felt safe</p> <p>110</p> <p>Building something together</p> <p>Trusting her as TA</p> <p>Togetherness 120</p>	<p>you to think about the relationship that you have with A. Can you tell me a little bit about that?</p> <p>ANNA: Yes, my relationship with A is built solely on trust. He trusts me and that was my first...I have actually been with A since year 3, apart from year 5 that was the only year I never had him. We built a real good trust together. I wanted him to know that he was safe, and I think that was a big, important thing for A to know he was safe. So, the first...year 3, we did a lot of fun things together. He had a fiddle box which helped him when he found it difficult, so we have built up a very, very good relationship to the point where he would trust me with any situation that he is in. For him that is a good thing, for me it can be quite difficult at times because I cannot always deal with absolutely everything that goes on within the school. So I have had to teach A that you know there are other people in this school</p>	<p><i>Use of the word trust ‘built solely on trust’ then ‘we built a really good trust together’ –building implies graft and effort</i> <u>The idea of the two of them together - a bond being forged</u></p> <p><i>Safety ‘a big important thing for A to know he was safe’ – why?</i></p> <p><i>We – together</i></p> <p><i>Again the use of ‘built’ and emphasis of ‘very’ – powerful language again focussing on ‘trust’</i></p> <p><u>The idea of trusting her in any situation – the of her to him what he is thinking and feeling</u></p> <p><u>Need to deal with everything? Feelings of abandoning him perhaps it is this that is difficult?</u></p> <p><i>I have had to teach A</i></p>
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<p>Her role as teacher</p> <p>Trust</p> <p>Trust in the relationship</p> <p>130</p> <p>A’s emotional issues</p> <p>140</p> <p>Role as parent</p>	<p>that you can turn to and who can help you here.</p> <p>So he has to know that there are other people he can turn to. So yes, so we have a good trusting relationship.</p> <p>Researcher: Can you think of times when that relationship has been particularly good, either particular examples or a time when it was particularly good, tell me a bit more about that.</p> <p>ANNA: In year 5 when I was not with A they were having lots of emotional problems with A. His grandfather was dying and it was having a real effect on A, he called him Pops and A was very close to his grandparents. It was having an adverse effect on his home life because mum and dad were having to spend a lot of time looking after grandpops and A was having to share their time. So although I was not working with him, because of all the issues they were having with him, they</p>	<p><u>Letting others into this relationship is it this that is difficult?</u></p> <p><u>Not around – feelings of not being there for him?</u></p> <p>Family issue that impacted on his life</p> <p><i>Personal language he uses in his family she uses as if she’s almost a family member – does she feel part of the family?</i></p> <p><u>This issue of being needed – she’s the one who can sort out the problems</u></p>
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<p>Special relationship</p>	<p>called me in and asked me if I would do a little bit of work with A. And he immediately opened up to me and told me what the problems were, how he was finding it difficult and he had not spoken to anybody else about that. So immediately and I was able to say to him, are you happy for me to tell your teacher about this A what you have told me and he said yes because nobody else understands.</p>	<p><i>‘he immediately opened up to me and told me what the problems were’</i></p> <p><u>This special relationship – he responds instantly to her and only her</u></p>
<p>150</p>	<p></p>	<p><i>Not spoken to anybody else – waiting for her?</i></p>
<p>Opening up – that personal connection</p>	<p></p>	<p>Description of what they were going to do to solve the problem.</p>
<p>Special relationship</p>	<p>So I was able to then relate that back to his learning support and his teacher about the emotions that he was feeling to do with his grandfather and that was a really important time for A because all his levels were dropping, he was having real meltdowns in class where he was walking out and storming out of the classroom, locking himself in the toilets and things like that. Which is something which he has never displayed before in year 3 and 4, we had never had that, and so it was sort of hard really to get to the bottom of that.</p>	<p><i>Nobody else understands</i></p> <p><u>Idea of this very special relationship they have – no-one else has this.</u></p>
<p>TA as mediator</p>	<p></p>	<p>Relating back incidences of behaviour and strong emotions around grandfather’s death</p>
<p>160</p>	<p></p>	<p><i>Use of ‘real meltdowns’ and ‘storming out’</i></p>
<p>His behavioural difficulties</p>	<p></p>	<p></p>
<p>Special relationship</p>	<p></p>	<p><u>Is this about their relationship being so strong? So special?</u></p>
<p>He opens up to her</p>	<p></p>	<p><i>Happy to talk to her</i></p>
<p>170</p>	<p></p>	<p></p>

<p>Special Relationship</p> <p>She’s there for him - Trust</p>	<p>But he was happy to talk about that with me and so I felt that even though I was not working with him we still had this very very good relationship that he was able to tell me what was going on and how he was feeling and that was the main thing.</p> <p>Researcher: Right, and how did, you know, in developing that relationship at that time, how did that kind of make you feel? What was the sort of feelings you had?</p>	<p>– <i>emphasis on ‘very very good relationship’ he can talk to her about his feelings</i></p> <p><i>Able to tell me what was going on – <u>trusts her</u></i></p>
<p>180</p> <p>Empathy between them</p>	<p>ANNA: Towards A?</p> <p>Researcher: Yes, and working with him.</p> <p>ANNA: Yes, well there was a lot of empathy I obviously felt for A. I wanted to reassure him and help him to realise that this is all part and parcel of life, because unfortunately we were all</p>	<p><i>Empathy – reassurance</i></p> <p><i>Use of the phrase ‘born to die’ strong emotional language.</i></p>
<p>190</p> <p>Trust to talk about feelings</p>	<p>born to die. So poor A had not really ever come across that before, so the fact that he trusted me enough to tell me how he was feeling and happy to</p>	<p><i>Use of ‘poor A’ – why is he poor?’</i></p> <p>Description of dealing with death issues</p>

<p>Pride in emotional connection</p> <p>Pride in his progress 200</p> <p>Togetherness on a journey</p> <p>210</p> <p>Conflict in their relationship – a battle</p> <p>detaching – taking a step back</p>	<p>talk to me about it, made me feel really really good and very proud of him actually that he was able to actually tell me how he felt, and happy for me to relay this on to his LSA and to the class teacher. So yes, it made me feel very, very proud of him that he had come that far in the years we have been together.</p> <p>Researcher: And maybe times when things have not gone so well and your relationship with him has not been so good, do you want to tell me a little bit about that?</p> <p>ANNA: Yes, there are times when A is very challenging. Sometimes I think we can be a bit too close, and then I have to stand back and I have to rethink what is going on and rethink about how we are because sometimes you get stuck in that rut and it can become a battle then and that is not a good thing for A and certainly not a good for me so sometimes I have to</p>	<p><i>Use of really really again strong emphasis of importance.</i></p> <p><u>Issue of the importance of the relationship to her and him – he can talk to her about his feelings</u></p> <p><u>The issue of how far they have come together - a long journey against hardship</u></p> <p><u>She talks like a mother feeling proud of her son</u></p> <p>Personal reflection on their relationship <i>Too close - idea of stepping back to look from a wider perspective</i></p> <p><u>Idea that she sometimes feels too close – what is her role? TA or Mother?</u></p> <p><i>Use of ‘battle’ – is that how she sees this? But in this together fighting the ‘battle’.</i></p>
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<p>220</p> <p>Togetherness</p> <p>Hardship</p>	<p>take that step back and think right, we need to rethink this, we need to think about where we want to be, where I want to take him now and then I will rejig about how we do this and put appropriate things into place to help A. We have always got through it, we have always got through it, but there have certainly been challenging times, there is no doubt about that. But I think that is par for the course for most</p>	<p><i>‘think about where we want to be’</i></p> <p><i>use of ‘we’ – togetherness again Where I want to take him now – is she guiding him and is in control of him?</i></p> <p><u>This idea of them together fighting the battle</u> <u>Together against hardship and getting through it</u></p>
<p>230</p> <p>‘A’s difficulties</p>	<p>children with the difficulties that A has because he is not just autistic he has ADHD as well. He has ADHD so he has that to deal with. He was medicated right up until about six weeks ago and I found that the anxiety is much better since he has come off the medication. He is not so anxious, you see more of his personality come out too. He is quite charming, where</p>	<p>Describing him in terms of his difficulties and medication he takes.</p> <p>Describing the effect of the medication on him</p> <p><i>He’s better when he’s off the medication – anxiety reduces and the ‘real’ person comes through.</i></p>
<p>240</p> <p>The real ‘A’</p>	<p>that suppressed a lot of his real personality with the medication.</p> <p>So for me, I think it has helped him to come off that medication, it certainly</p>	<p><u>Idea that he is different people – the real person and the medicated person. Is she different people as well – mother, TA?</u></p>

<p>250</p> <p>The real ‘A’</p> <p>Lack of connection</p> <p>260</p> <p>Different sides of ‘A’</p> <p>His behaviour</p>	<p>helped me as well because I feel I have got the real A and I am dealing with the real A. So yes.</p> <p>Researcher: And when he was on the medication, you said he was on it for quite a long time.</p> <p>ANNA: Yes.</p> <p>Researcher: So how did that make you feel? Did you feel that affected your relationship at all?</p> <p>ANNA: Yes, because when he used to come in in the mornings he was very zombie-like, very spaced-out, very sort of out of it. Found it difficult to make eye contact when he was on the medication. He would be very subdued, lost the humour, he has a very good sense of humour, so that would almost come back in the afternoon because by then the medication would start wearing off. So we used to see more of an A in the afternoon, but that posed its own problems because he was so subdued in the morning then when</p>	<p>Description of A on medication</p> <p><i>‘use of ‘zombie-like’ again like he’s a different person</i></p> <p><i>Subdued and ‘lost the humour’ personal reflections on his personality. Different sides of A</i></p>
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<p>difficulties</p> <p>270</p> <p>TA role to help</p>	<p>he would become quite hyper in the afternoon, people found that quite difficult to deal with. Where now, he comes in in a state where he is quite hyper but he is like it right the way through the day and it's more accepted, it's more able to be dealt with rather than just those short couple of hours in the afternoon where it seems to be quite full on. So I think personally coming off the medication, for me as an LSA, is better.</p>	<p>Description of him off the medication</p> <p><i>For me as an LSA – she is in her LSA role and the need to emphasis that</i></p>
<p>280</p> <p>Communicating feelings and emotions</p> <p>Relates to her 290 Connects to him</p>	<p>Researcher: And how do you think that has affected your relationship if at all?</p> <p>ANNA: With A?</p> <p>Researcher: Yes.</p> <p>ANNA: It has made it 100 times better, 100 times better. Because he can tell me exactly how he is feeling and he can relate to exactly how I am feeling, it is like opening a book and seeing and reading and understanding what is going on. It is much better, you</p>	<p><i>Emphasis and exaggeration 100 times better</i></p> <p><u>The idea that he is more real when off the medication – he can relate to her.</u></p> <p><i>'relate to exactly how I'm feeling' – this seems to be very important to her.</i></p> <p><i>Like opening a book...he is a story</i></p>

<p>The real ‘A’</p> <p>Togetherness – they overcome difficulties together</p> <p>300</p> <p>His communication difficulties</p> <p>His voice</p> <p>TA role mediator</p> <p>Together</p> <p>310</p> <p>His organisational difficulties</p>	<p>have got the real person that you are talking to and dealing with. So it has become much better for him certainly and me.</p> <p>Researcher: And thinking about the relationship from, you have worked with him for a long time, but thinking about it from the beginning to where you are now, how has that relationship changed over time, if at all.</p> <p>ANNA: It has, it has changed quite a lot. When he was in year 3 and 4, he was far more organised, when he was in year 3 and 4, he could organise himself brilliantly. That was the one thing I never really had to work on. But found it quite difficult to express himself then. We did lots of emotional work together. Since as I did not have a great deal to do with him in year 5 but certainly since year 6 his organisation skills have really become quite poor and we have had to do some work on that. But again, since coming</p>	<p><i>that is unfolding for her?</i></p> <p><u>The idea that this is the real person that she can connect with not the one who is medicated</u></p> <p>Description of him in years 3 and 4</p> <p><i>Organise himself brilliantly</i></p> <p><i>I never really had to work on – he has some independent skills</i></p> <p><i>Difficult to express himself – is she his voice?</i></p> <p><u>The idea of emotional work together and whose needs this is satisfying.</u></p> <p>Describing a deterioration in organisational skills</p> <p><i>Really become quite poor – and this is when she wasn’t there – does she feel some guilt over this or</i></p>
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<p>Anxiety</p> <p>320</p>	<p>off this medication, that has become better. And when he was in year 3 and 4 he did not used to talk to himself and have this anxiety that seem to sort of manifest in year 5 when he lost his grandpa. That certainly was the trigger I believe for A with the anxiety. So we never had the anxiety in year 3 and 4 that we have had and certainly the school had in year 5 and for me within year 6, but again, with no medication now the anxiety level has dropped which has been really good for A.</p>	<p><u>Is it a confirmation for her that it is only her who can work with him and when she isn't there things deteriorate?</u></p> <p>Describing him dealing with grandpa's death</p> <p><i>'we never had anxiety in year 3 and 4' – would things have been better if she'd been working with him when his grandpa died</i></p>
<p>The real 'A'</p> <p>330</p>	<p>So we see a much happier A, a much more open book. You see the real A, so we have the sense of humour and he is happy because of the anxiety is not there so much.</p>	<p><i>Again the metaphor of the book and the real A with his humour and being happy</i></p>
<p>Affection</p> <p>Trust</p>	<p>Researcher: You talked about sense of humour, how important is that in the relationship you have with him?</p> <p>ANNA: I think it is very important, I think the fact that he knows he can make me laugh, he loves the fact that</p>	<p><i>Making her laugh .. he loves the fact that he can make me laugh – this is personal and very affectionate language – emphasises the bond they have</i></p>

340	he can make me laugh, and I think that	<i>I will help him find the answers that he needs – powerful use of language and again emphasising the closeness of their relationship</i>
TA role mediator	is what has helped him learn to trust me. Because I think he always feels that I will help him find the answers that he needs. And that is what I think	<u>Idea that they work together to solve his problems</u>
Trust	the trust is between A and I, that I will always help him find that answer...the problem we can find a solution A and we need to look at where you want to be and what you want from this and	<i>Reverts to ‘you’ and making this a personal conversation between them</i>
350	what road we go down to get that. And so his sense of humour in all of this has	<i>Where you want to be.. what you want.. what road</i>
Togetherness	been part of us having this good relationship and trusting each other and	<u>Idea that she is more than just a TA to him</u>
Trust	feeling safe with each other.	
Safety	Researcher: How do you think he feels about your relationship, it is a tough question I know but I wonder, what do you think he gets out of it or feels about it?	<u>Refocusing from personal mothering role back to TA role by stepping back</u>
360	ANNA: I think sometimes I might drive him mad, because I keep focussing him, “but I don’t want to look at the teacher”, “okay then just	<i>Reverts to the personal conversation again – is this her mother role?</i>
Her role at teacher		<u>Idea of moving</u>

<p>Personal affirmation</p> <p>Dependence 370</p> <p>Reliance on her</p> <p>380</p> <p>TA role helper</p> <p>Pride in progress</p>	<p>look above the teacher but I need you to be facing that way”, “do I have to”, “yes you have to”. So yes, so sometimes I think I can drive him mad, but I think he likes me, I would like to think he likes me a lot. He often tells me, I cannot do this without you Mrs ... and yes if I am going home he will often say “who have I got then” and I will perhaps say who is having him in particular that day “can’t you stay Mrs”, “no I cannot A I have got to go”. But then he is fine, he is fine he does not get upset and hang on to me or anything like that that would be awful. But no, he is cool.</p> <p>Researcher: So about the relationship you have with him, what does it mean to you, what sense do you make out of it. What does it mean to you?</p> <p>ANNA: It means an awful lot to me. I feel that I can help A in any way then I have achieved my goal. If A can have as...I do not like to use the word</p>	<p><u>between roles – personal conversation is a mother –child relationship compared with her more factual discussion about him in role of TA</u></p> <p><i>I cannot do this without you</i></p> <p><i>Can’t you stay</i></p> <p><u>Idea that he is reliant on her – only she will do</u></p> <p><i>His upset causing her upset</i></p> <p><i>Use of ‘cool’ – a modern term identifying with a child?</i></p> <p><i>I have achieved my goal – she is investing herself in him</i></p> <p><u>Idea of ‘normality’ and being like everyone else</u></p> <p><u>Idea that her role is for him to be able to</u></p>
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<p>Fitting in</p> <p>390</p> <p>Pride in achievement</p> <p>Her role as guide / helper</p> <p>400</p> <p>Anxiety – hers</p> <p>410</p> <p>Role as a mother</p>	<p>“normal”, but as normal life as he possibly can and be accepted and feel he is part of his community and then I feel great about that. You know I feel that my job is that is what I want for A, I want for A to cope without me at the end of the day. That he does not need the interventions all the time.</p> <p>Researcher: And I think you said that you will not be working with him from the end of this term.</p> <p>ANNA: No.</p> <p>Researcher: So how does that make you feel, what do you think about that?</p> <p>ANNA: I am honestly worried about how he is going to cope, but I think he is going to do really well. I really do I think he is going to do really well. I truly believe where he is going the support is very very good, my own children have gone there and my eldest son has Asperger’s so obviously you know going through the school he had really good support and I think they</p>	<p><u>cope without her - like that of a parent when their child is ready to leave</u></p> <p><i>To cope without me at the end of the day – this is her role</i></p> <p>Describes when she won’t be working with him.</p> <p><i>Worried about how he will cope – her anxiety is present</i></p> <p><u>Idea of a personal connection – her son with AS and her children having attended the school A is going to</u></p>
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<p>Trust</p> <p>Safety</p> <p>Protection 420</p> <p>Pride in achievement</p> <p>430</p> <p>TA role as parent</p>	<p>can offer A the type of support that A needs. And I feel that A can build up a very good relationship with someone he can trust and feel safe with and I am sure they will be there to do that for him. My own personal feeling is, as with all the children I have always worked with, it is sad to see them go. I think you do feel that protection towards them but it is such a great thing when you get the feedback from the schools saying how well they are doing and because obviously we ... because it's still and we work within the schools and we get feedback and it is great to hear how well they are doing.</p> <p>Researcher: That protection, sort of feeling protection for him, and you said with others as well, but particularly for A. Why is that important? Tell me a bit more about that, for you particularly.</p> <p>ANNA: For me particularly, is it a</p>	<p><i>Building a good relationship with others</i></p> <p><i>Trust and safety</i></p> <p><u>Idea that trust and safety are integral to relationships for A</u></p> <p>Describes her feelings about leaving A and other children she's worked with.</p> <p><i>Protection</i></p> <p><u>Idea of the personal reward to her of feeling successful</u></p> <p><i>Motherly instinct and protective</i></p> <p><u>Idea that she is a mother to him – contrasting roles as TA and mother</u></p>
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<p>Protection</p> <p>Hardship 440</p>	<p>motherly instinct, I am not sure, I just feel very protective towards him. I do not like...it is crazy but I almost feel his pain and I want to help him to not have that pain when people perhaps can be unkind and when he is struggling and I know he is finding it</p>	<p><u>towards him.</u></p> <p><i>Feeling his pain – very loving language like a mother for her child</i></p> <p><u>Idea of protecting him against the world and painful things.</u></p>
<p>TA role helper</p> <p>His happiness is her reward</p>	<p>really difficult with anything in particular. So within me I feel the need to try and find a solution to help A with those needs because at the end of the day I just want A to be happy, I just want him to have a happy life. So that</p>	<p>Describing her goals and aspirations for him</p> <p><i>Happy life</i></p>
<p>Protection</p> <p>450</p>	<p>is I think where that protection comes in that I want to protect him from things and help him understand things that are not always great in life, and then embrace the things that are really good in life. Deal with the things that are not so great but embrace the great things.</p> <p>Researcher: And the motherly instinct side of it, what does that mean for you?</p> <p>ANNA: It is that protection thing, it is</p>	<p><u>Idea that she is there to protect him from the bad things and help him understand</u></p> <p><i>Embrace the great things – strong aspirations for him and very personal expressions</i></p>
<p>Protection</p>	<p></p>	<p><i>Protect him from harm</i></p> <p>Describing difficulties in leaving children</p>

460	wanting to protect and you know no	
Role as ‘mother’	harm come to him. I think I feel that	<i>Find it difficult to say goodbye – she feels pain in leaving - this is more than just a job?</i>
Separation-detaching	with all the children in the class, I find it difficult to say goodbye to all of them and I do a lot of work with the other children in the class, you know I do mentoring so the children that are having problems or need a little bit of help a little bit of you know then I am always there for all the children.	<i>Always there – she is investing in the children she supports – similar to investing in her own children?</i>
TA role mediator		
Trust		
Investing in them		
470	Researcher: Would you think there is any difference in your relationship with A, say to the other children then?	
	ANNA: Yes.	
	Researcher: Right. What would that be?	
‘A’s personality the real ‘A’	ANNA: Yes, definitely. With the other children it is far easier to help them understand what is going on with them, because more often than not it is friendship issues or maybe things at home are not great or whatever, they find it far easier to understand when we talk things through. For A it is far	Describes the differences in her relationship with A from other children. <u>Idea that she is there to help him understand</u>
Social difficulties		
480		
His difficulties understanding		<i>Grasp the emotions – this is important for</i>

<p>of emotions / feelings</p> <p>490</p> <p>His communication difficulties</p> <p>500</p> <p>Journey together</p> <p>Togetherness</p> <p>540</p>	<p>more difficult for him to understand and grasp the emotions of things, so many different emotions that go on, for him to understand all those different emotions and that is something we have worked on quite a lot and he has a far better idea about his emotions than he had before. Before he could not tell you what the problems were, so if there was an issue either at home or something was going on at school, in year 3 and 4 he found that, to start with, very difficult. The only way we would know is if those traits would become far more noticeable. He was not so happy and then we would have to talk and it might be weeks before we got to the bottom of what actually was going on. But we have come a long way since then so in year 6 now he is much more able now to tell me as he did in year 5 because of all the emotion work that we put in during year 3 and 4. But working with the other children it is there. That is already there, so</p>	<p><i>her</i></p> <p>Description of his emotions.</p> <p><i>He could not tell you what the problems were</i> <u>Trust</u></p> <p><u>Communication issues</u></p> <p><i>We have come along way – again the idea of a journey together</i></p> <p><i>We put in – again the we emphasises togetherness</i></p> <p><u>Idea that she has had to teach him how to recognise emotions</u></p>
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<p>510</p> <p>Her role as teacher</p>	<p>they can talk and you can talk quite without having to make them understand. For A, that almost had to be taught those emotions. There were lots of things that I had to teach A that came quite naturally to other children. That he found difficult.</p>	<p>Description of teaching him emotions and friendship.</p>
<p>Communicating his emotions / feelings - difficulties</p> <p>520</p>	<p>Researcher: Such as?</p> <p>ANNA: Well obviously the emotion side of things, friendship, knowing when it was appropriate to say something. You know was that the appropriate thing to say and maybe how he could have said it. It is quite difficult because it is things that just come naturally to us, for A, things just did not come naturally to him. He kind of felt that he just did not fit in somewhere, he was like the square peg in the round hole. But obviously he has come a long long way since then.</p>	<p><i>Things come naturally to us</i></p>
<p>Communication difficulties</p> <p>Being different</p> <p>Normality – fitting in</p>	<p>Researcher: And finally, is there anything else about your experience of working with A in particularly in the</p>	<p><u>Idea of not fitting in and being different</u></p> <p><i>Square peg in round hole emphasises differences</i></p>
<p>530</p>	<p>Researcher: And finally, is there anything else about your experience of working with A in particularly in the</p>	

<p>540</p> <p>Team work – togetherness</p>	<p>relationship that you want to talk about or tell me about?</p> <p>ANNA: No, not really. I mean I am fortunate enough that I have a good relationship with his parents and that has helped an awful lot because obviously issues at home, well I think I have a good relationship with his parents that they are able to come in and talk to me about things that have happened at home and I hope that I have helped them address that and vice versa. I am able to go and talk to them about the things that maybe A has found quite hard at school and that has been a great help because we have worked quite well as a team where that is concerned with the school and I think that has been quite important for A to know that his parents are happy and that makes him happy. He is an only child so his parents are his nucleus, they are his soul. If you ever say to A what makes you happy, then he will say mum and dad. So for him</p>	<p>Describing relationship with A's parents</p> <p><i>They can talk to me - she emphasises the importance of her role in listening to them as well as A</i></p> <p><i>Working as a team – the togetherness</i></p> <p><i>Happy and happiness highlighted</i></p> <p><i>'Nucleus' stresses importance of family role –is this related to her being a 'mother' in their relationship?</i></p>
<p>550</p> <p>Family / parenting</p>	<p>relationship that you want to talk about or tell me about?</p> <p>ANNA: No, not really. I mean I am fortunate enough that I have a good relationship with his parents and that has helped an awful lot because obviously issues at home, well I think I have a good relationship with his parents that they are able to come in and talk to me about things that have happened at home and I hope that I have helped them address that and vice versa. I am able to go and talk to them about the things that maybe A has found quite hard at school and that has been a great help because we have worked quite well as a team where that is concerned with the school and I think that has been quite important for A to know that his parents are happy and that makes him happy. He is an only child so his parents are his nucleus, they are his soul. If you ever say to A what makes you happy, then he will say mum and dad. So for him</p>	<p>Describing relationship with A's parents</p> <p><i>They can talk to me - she emphasises the importance of her role in listening to them as well as A</i></p> <p><i>Working as a team – the togetherness</i></p> <p><i>Happy and happiness highlighted</i></p> <p><i>'Nucleus' stresses importance of family role –is this related to her being a 'mother' in their relationship?</i></p>

560	<p>they are the most important thing.</p> <p>Researcher: Brilliant, we are done.</p> <p>ANNA: Oh terrific.</p>	
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Initial Themes	Original transcript	Exploratory Comments
<p>Role as TA is to assist</p> <p>10</p> <p>Position as teacher</p> <p>Functional and practical support</p> <p>20</p>	<p>Researcher: Just tell me a little bit about the support that you do with B.</p> <p>BETH: My role is to assist B on a day-to-day basis, learning support. That can go ... I do four hours with him. I go straight from 9:00 o'clock in the morning, when he comes out of assembly, I help him in his work, I will sit nearby him, I will assist him when he needs assisted help and focus. Then I go through, I do break with him, I look after him during break, make sure that he is behaving appropriately at break times. Then I will go into his next lesson and then that follows through into lunch time where I will work, well, I will look after him, make sure he is okay in the dinner hall, make sure he feels that he has got somebody around him that can assist him if he needs help. Help him focus and concentrate during the dinner time, because it can be quite noisy and then I go out to play with him and watch him</p>	<p>Description of support she does with him</p> <p><i>Factual use of language to describe her work with him</i></p> <p><i>Assist – quite formal language</i></p> <p>Describes her role as TA</p> <p><i>Looking after him</i></p> <p>Description of him at lunchtime and role in helping him focus</p> <p>Role as TA</p>

<p>30</p> <p>Position as teacher</p> <p>Focussing him on what is going on in class</p> <p>40</p> <p>Difficulties with focus and concentration</p>	<p>from a distance, quite often, but</p> <p>sometimes I will go over and, obviously, give him assistance, help him play and join in where necessary.</p> <p>Researcher: Brilliant. And the sort of things that you might do with him in lessons, how would your support work in lessons...</p> <p>BETH: My support is primarily focus based. That can be anything from reminding him how to sit on his chair to focussing on the teacher and what is going on to actually assisting him by, perhaps helping writing his learning objective, his day on the whiteboard, a mini whiteboard, because he has problems concentrating and focussing what is on the board and the smart board. It can be helping him with that and also there is a reward system in place and we ... what we end up doing is trying to ... I write down a list of instructions for him to follow on that whiteboard and he</p>	<p><i>Use of ‘focus’ repeated – her language is focussed as well on factual details</i></p> <p>Description of her role as support</p> <p><i>Again ‘focussing’</i></p> <p>Description of the support in class - details of the activities he needs support in.</p>
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50	<p>knows in order to focus he will get a reward at the end of the lesson, but it could be he will need help when he stops doing his work, it can be making sure he knows the various stages of what he needs to do. Reminding him sometimes to get his equipment and making sure that he writes and reminding him to write neatly and sometimes, well, quite often, he will need help interpreting some of the information that is given because his understanding is limited.</p>	<p><i>Language continues to be factual and in great detail</i></p> <p><i>Understanding limited – so she has to fill in the gaps?</i></p>
60	<p>Researcher: What about things like play times, how would your support work?</p> <p>BETH: B has problems socialising, he tends to play alongside other children. He can play with other children but it is rare. If he does play he tends to get a little heavy handed and not understanding the kind of social skills you use in the playground, he does not quite understand those, so it is making sure ... instead of verbalising what he wants to say, what</p>	<p><i>Problems socialising – social difficulties and factual language to describe his difficulties.</i></p> <p><i>Repeated use of ‘understand’ – he doesn’t understand but</i></p> <p><u>Idea that her language is so factually detailed that it is almost as if she feels others don’t understand either so</u></p>
70		

<p>Functional relationship</p>	<p>often happens is that he will perhaps push someone cause that means,...he mimics other children, he wants to play with them, so its reminding him how to use his kind hands and reminding him what is appropriate in the playground. We also have a social story for that as well to help him understand what happens in the playground.</p>	<p><u>he has to be very detailed in her explanation</u></p> <p><u>Her role as a TA</u></p> <p><u>Idea that this is a very functional relationship – a set of processes rather than an emotional connection</u></p> <p><u>A social story sorts out the problem rather than social interaction?</u></p>
<p>80</p>	<p>Researcher: Fantastic. Thinking, specifically. I want you to think about your relationship with him and how that has developed. Can you tell me a little bit about your relationship with B?</p> <p>BETH: When B first came, I did not know much about him or his condition at all. I had very little information but as the time has progressed he has ... I have realised actually he has formed quite an</p>	
<p>Personal attachment and connection</p> <p>90</p>	<p>attachment to me. He knows automatically to wait for me, if I have gone somewhere he will just wait, he will not even go off and that is not really from</p>	<p><i>Not knowing about him – not understanding?</i></p> <p><i>Little information – again the need for facts and information.</i></p> <p><i>Formed an attachment – matter of fact language</i></p> <p><u>Idea that attachment is based on need for her</u></p>

<p>Needing her</p>	<p>me asking him, I think he has just</p>	
<p>Detachment – too close</p>	<p>developed that kind of need for me and I am aware that, obviously, the need ...</p>	<p><i>That kind of need for me....you don't want it to be too much – why not?</i></p>
<p>100</p>	<p>you don't want it to be too much because you want him to be independent, but he has ... he will now look at me a little bit more – it might only be for a short period of time where he will make a little ... he</p>	<p><u>idea that attachment is him waiting for her and not going off rather than an emotional connection.</u></p>
<p>Difficulties with eye contact</p>	<p>finds it difficult to make eye contact, it might be a short period of time and I can now ask him a question and he will respond to it. More often than not.</p>	<p>Description of her interaction with him – factual description</p>
<p>TA position as mediator</p>	<p>Sometimes he does choose not to respond but more often than not if I can get him in a quiet room, his parents actually ... his parents asked me to ask ... they could not ask him about the disco the other night.</p>	<p><i>Choose not to respond – under his control</i></p>
<p>110</p>		<p><i>Parents couldn't ask about the disco – why not? She is an intermediary</i></p>
<p>Confiding in her - trust</p>	<p>He had gone for the first time and he actually confided in me, to tell me what had happened and that is quite a new</p>	<p><i>He actually confided – an emotional connection – a confidence?</i></p>
<p>Trust in telling her</p>	<p>thing. I think our relationship has got to the point where it has developed enough</p>	<p><u>Idea that relationship is safe enough for him to confide in her</u></p>
<p>Normality</p>	<p>for him to be able to tell me things. It will be snippets, it will not be a normal, whatever normal is, conversation, but it</p>	<p><i>Not be normal – is being normal important to her?</i></p>

120	<p>will be, I think he said something along the lines of it was loud but I did not need to wear my ear defenders. I asked him whether he would go again, he said no. He said he danced to the Happy Song, it was very short, but very ... he did give me the answers that I needed and that I was able then to relate to his parents so their fears were alleviated.</p>	<p>Factual description of him at the disco</p> <p><i>Uses his voice and relays a conversation – this has been unusual so far.</i></p> <p><i>The answers that I needed – again as if there is a problem to be solved? An abnormality to be made normal?</i></p> <p><i>Fears – what are these fears?</i></p>
130	<p>Researcher: And that attachment, that eye contact, those kind of things you just talked about, how does that make you feel?</p>	
<p>His difficulty socially - hardship</p> <p>His progress makes her feel good</p>	<p>BETH: Good, good, because I know he finds it so hard. To be honest more than academic. More than academically, I think that that is such ... so important that he has managed to do ... at the end of the year, we have come from not even really looking to making very fleeting eye contact. It is good, it is certainly progression. It does make you feel good.</p>	<p>Describes how hard he finds things</p> <p><i>It does make you feel good – how it affects her</i></p> <p><u>Issue about how hard he finds things and how she helps him</u></p>
150		

<p>His smile makes her feel good – a personal connection</p>	<p>Researcher: And times when you feel the relationship has gone particularly well. Can you think about that? Tell me a bit about times when the relationship has gone particularly well?</p> <p>BETH: Just when we are doing something ... it is hard to think of specific off the top of my head now but when we are doing some work and he just really understands it and he beams, he gives the most beautiful smile and he seems that he just understands, it is hard to give a specific to be honest with you. I'll probably think of something, but my mind has gone blank.</p> <p>Researcher: If you do, just let me know.</p> <p>BETH: I will say.</p> <p>Researcher: I wondered if ... same sort of idea but if there are times when you</p>	<p><i>He beams...the most beautiful smile – this means a lot to her</i></p> <p><u>His progress – his understanding means a lot to her</u></p>
<p>160</p> <p>170</p>	<p>just really understands it and he beams, he gives the most beautiful smile and he seems that he just understands, it is hard to give a specific to be honest with you. I'll probably think of something, but my mind has gone blank.</p> <p>Researcher: If you do, just let me know.</p> <p>BETH: I will say.</p> <p>Researcher: I wondered if ... same sort of idea but if there are times when you have felt that relationship has not gone so well.</p>	

<p>Frustration when he doesn't do things he can</p> <p>Concentration difficulties</p> <p>Her frustration when he can't do things 180</p> <p>Her role as TA is to help him make progress</p> <p>Her aspirations for him to do well</p> <p>Feelings of putting pressure on him 190</p> <p>Difficulty / hardship</p>	<p>BETH: I think at times it is easy to get frustrated, from my point of view, I think because you know he can do, if he focussed, he could do so much better, so I think there are times when you certainly feel that you could get frustrated. You feel like ... I would just, I would like you to focus for a minute because I know you can do this and you have to take a step back, but I feel at those times you really do need to take a step back and actually think to yourself why is this child finding it so hard and what is it about ... that is just something you learn as you go on. There have certainly been times where I have thought, ah, you can do so much better, I have not said it but I have felt like it because I want him to do so well. I think that is fairly normal in those situations but it does not make you feel very good about yourself because you do think well that is ... you are putting pressure on a child really, you do not want to be putting ... when they are</p>	<p>Describes her feelings and frustrations</p> <p><i>Could do so much better – her aspirations for him</i></p> <p><u>Issue over her feeling he could do better</u></p> <p><u>Are these feelings of her lack of power to change him?</u></p> <p><i>This child – this language is of frustration that she depersonalises him.</i></p> <p><i>I want him to do so well - her goals and aspirations for him.</i></p> <p><i>Normal - justifying herself?</i></p> <p><u>Her feelings of her own failure</u></p>
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<p>200</p>	<p>finding life quite difficult as it is.</p> <p>Researcher: I want you to think about when you first started working with him, to where you are now. How do you think that relationship has developed? What things do you think have been important to developing that relationship?</p>	<p><i>Finding life difficult</i> – she talks a lot about difficulty and frustration / hardship</p>
<p>Time and patience to get him to focus</p>	<p>BETH: I think it has been important to give him time and patience, he needs a great deal of patience because you can spend a large proportion of your time focussing him. Sometimes it can take, particularly at the beginning, half of the lesson, if not more, to get him to even, to</p>	<p><i>Time and patience</i> – she notes the amount of time and effort it takes working with him</p>
<p>Difficulties in getting him to focus</p> <p>210</p>	<p>pick up pencil. He's looking round the class and I think we are now at a stage where sometimes it is only five minutes, which for a lot of people it is quite a long time. You can ... I have learnt how to get his focus and attention. I know what works and what does not work for him. I suppose I have just learned about him and what works for him, if you know what I</p>	<p>Describing her work with him and getting him to focus</p> <p><u>It is hard work</u></p>
<p>Special relationship</p>	<p>what works for him, if you know what I</p>	<p><u>Her role as a TA and her experience of him</u></p> <p><i>I know what works and what does not work for him</i> – she is the expert on B</p>

<p>Position as parent 220</p>	<p>mean. He just, he needs somebody just to be caring and understand. When he is</p>	<p><i>Needs somebody to be caring and understand</i></p>
<p>Trust</p>	<p>finding the world extremely tricky, he just needs somebody that will ... that he</p>	<p><u>Her role as a TA is to care and understand-a nurturing role</u></p>
<p>Trust – can relay on her 230</p>	<p>can rely on and I suppose that is how our relationship has progressed because he</p>	<p><i>Rely on</i></p>
	<p>knows, I think he knows, he can rely on me.</p>	<p><u>He can trust her – she is reliable</u></p>
	<p>Researcher: Yes.</p>	
	<p>BETH: And I am there for him.</p>	
	<p>Researcher: And along the way, over</p>	
<p>240</p>	<p>that time you have worked with him, what would you say have been the main</p>	<p><u>It’s a two way relationship based on trust</u></p>
	<p>difficulties in you developing that relationship?</p>	
	<p>BETH: What I said before, really. It is</p>	
	<p>the frustration with his concentration. I</p>	
	<p>always go back to it because I think that</p>	
<p>Frustration at his lack of focus</p>	<p>is B's main issue. He finds it extremely</p>	<p><u>Her frustration and how hard it is working with him</u></p>
	<p>difficult to focus and when he is ...</p>	
	<p>sometimes he will choose not to listen</p>	
<p>Frustration when he chooses not to listen</p>		<p>Description of his difficulties with</p>

<p>250</p> <p>Her personal knowledge of him over a long time – special relationship</p>	<p>and that can be quite frustrating. There was actually something, somebody had written before I had ... the lady that looked after him before, they had obviously worked with some specialists and they had said well we think B is not hearing but I have learned over the years that he knows you use ... if you ask him to do something and then you ask him to do something that he wants to do, he can</p>	<p>focus</p> <p>Description of how others had worked with him</p> <p><u>She knows him best – more so than the ‘specialists’</u></p>
<p>260</p> <p>Challenging to get him to connect with her</p> <p>Hardship in developing a relationship</p>	<p>hear the things that he wants to do, so I think that has been quite challenging, is to get him to respond when you need to. I think, some of the times, if he ... he often ... if he finds something difficult, he goes and spends a long time in the toilet. That is something that he will do. He will just go, particularly at the beginning he was sometimes, I would have to go and find him and I was calling</p>	<p><i>Has been quite challenging – it’s hard work</i></p> <p><i>He finds something difficult - <u>again the language of hardship and difficulty.</u></i></p>
<p>Special relationship</p> <p>270</p>	<p>him and calling him and he would not come out, that has reduced significantly. He very rarely, although work ... it has actually got trickier as the year has gone on because we have progressed to things</p>	<p><u>Frustration?</u></p> <p><i>has actually got trickier...again difficulty and hardship</i></p>

<p>Ta position as mediator</p> <p>280 Her role is to help him</p> <p>Togetherness</p> <p>Independence Getting him to take ownership of things</p> <p>290 Her job is a mediator</p>	<p>that B is not familiar with but I think he understands that I can break the work down for him and I can make it a little bit ... simplify it for him, that would be the best way of putting it. So, he knows that that is okay for him and he can do what I am asking him to do or we can work ... I always say to him, I am here to help you, we can do this together and we might only do three of the 10 things that the others are doing and we will do those three things but we will do them really well and also trying to get him to be a little bit more independent and take ownership for those particular things and that is quite tricky as well because he relies a little too much that somebody will help him. It is then getting that balance right of ...</p> <p>Researcher: You mentioned at the beginning, attachment and you said that attachment, tell me a little bit more about that and what your thoughts are on that.</p>	<p><u>She can help him – she has the expertise</u></p> <p><i>I am here to help you togetherness – teamwork</i></p> <p><u>Idea of doing things really well</u></p> <p><i>We will do them really well</i></p> <p><u>Independence and taking ownership</u></p> <p><u>He is over-reliant</u></p> <p><u>Her role – to promote independence</u></p>
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<p>Reliance on her</p> <p>300</p>	<p>BETH: I think he has learnt to rely on me a great deal and rely on his ... not just me, there is another lady that works with him. His LSAs he knows. He will often lean on you. You will find that he was observed once with just leaning, not actually against me, it was against his LSA that works with him in the afternoon, leaning against her. He knows that you are there, he also will chat to you</p>	<p><i>Learnt to rely on me a great deal</i></p> <p><u>Reliance on her</u></p> <p><i>Will often lean on you</i></p> <p><u>Physical closeness</u></p> <p>Description of physical closeness</p>
<p>Trust in knowing she's there</p> <p>Communication difficulties</p> <p>310</p>	<p>if you are too close to him, he will start just having a conversation about ... and he finds it difficult to communicate ... but it will suddenly, he will talk to you about what he is doing at the weekend so you have to remove yourself away from him particularly if you feel that he is not listening, he wants to tell you what is going on. He does find it easier to be with somebody and I think he will ... he would often say to me, oh well he would be non-verbal, he would say like and I would have to say to him, you use your words, use your words to tell me, don't just give me a gesture. Tell me what you</p>	<p><i>Finds it difficult to communicate</i></p> <p><i>Suddenly he will talk to you</i></p> <p><u>Idea of physical and emotional closeness</u></p>
<p>TA teacher role-Forcing him to communicate Pushing him to make progress</p> <p>320</p>	<p>just give me a gesture. Tell me what you</p>	<p><u>TA feels she has to move away</u></p> <p><u>Communication is important – she feels she needs to push him to communicate</u></p> <p><i>Use your words repeated</i></p>

<p>She is there as a mediator for him</p>	<p>would like, to try and get him to verbalise</p>	
<p>Attachment to her</p>	<p>what he wants. I do use a lot of non-verbal communication for things like sit down, looking and listening. That works well when you are from afar and again, the attachment I suppose, he has</p>	<p><u>She does lots for him to try and engage with him and get him to engage back</u></p>
<p>330 Concerns about too much attachment</p>	<p>learnt ... he looks for me sometimes when he does not know what is going on.</p>	<p><i>The attachment</i> <u>She talks about attachment and closeness</u></p>
<p>Need to promote independence</p>	<p>But I am aware that too much attachment and I think the other LSA that looks after him ... we are both aware that he needs</p>	<p><i>I am aware that too much attachment...to try and get him to be a little more independent</i></p>
<p>Distancing herself – don’t get too close</p>	<p>to be ... to try and get him to be a little more independent which we have been working on this term. I have been trying to give him easier things to do but it ...</p>	<p><u>She distances herself her role as TA</u></p> <p>Describing how she works with him – her role as support</p>
<p>TA role mediator</p>	<p>take a step back a bit more so that at least he can now learn an objective in a day in his book without being asked, you might</p>	<p><i>Take a step back</i> <u>She feels she needs to step back – her role is to develop his independence</u></p>
<p>340</p>	<p>have to remind him what he needs to be doing. "What do you need to be doing B?" "You should be doing something" but he knows what he has got to do, if that makes sense?</p>	<p><u>She moves from nurturing role to more distant professional TA role</u></p> <p><u>Urgency – he needs to be doing something</u></p>
<p>Frustration</p>	<p>Researcher: Yes</p>	

<p>when he doesn't achieve</p> <p>350</p>	<p>BETH: He knows what he has got to do but he needs to focus to do it. You need to remind him to focus, but he knows what he needs to do now. Which is a step in the right direction.</p> <p>Researcher: And the relationship you have got with him, I suppose, what sense do you make of it, what does it mean to you?</p>	<p><u>Frustration with him when he isn't achieving what he is capable of</u></p>
<p>Reliable and constant figure in child's life</p> <p>360</p> <p>Attachment / safety</p>	<p>BETH: Difficult, I think he needs somebody constant perhaps in his life, which is unfortunate because, obviously, that does not happen at a school really but I think sometimes he forms an attachment because he is familiar and the familiarisation, perhaps, is key ... he does not like change particularly.</p>	<p><i>Somebody constant</i></p> <p><u>Idea of being reliable and constant in his life</u></p> <p><i>Forms an attachment</i></p> <p><u>Attachment is important to her</u></p>
<p>Not liking change – needs for consistency</p>	<p>Although we have told him he is having a new LSA next year and actually we have managed to sell it to him in a certain way that he seems actually quite excited about it. We have taken pictures, we have done</p>	<p>Description of activities they have done with him to prepare him for a new LSA</p>

<p>370 Familiarity</p> <p>His difficulties with noise</p> <p>380</p> <p>Nurturing role – position as parent</p> <p>Safety and security</p> <p>390</p>	<p>that. I think he has just got familiar with us and he knows ... I think also, we say it in quite a calm way, we do not shout at him, he does not like shouting, he works better from positive reinforcement. He finds it very difficult if you shouting which, as teachers, you get but I think he understands that if you're calm and you're trying to calm him all the time and making sure that everything is okay, it enables him to see the world a bit better, it is not such a scary place. I think sometimes ... we often wonder what goes through his head, I think when he is walking round, sometimes he will walk around the playground. He does not really know ... but he is happy, he is always happy, he does not know what is going on and you think, he is familiar now, he knows what he is doing and he feels happy and safe. That is the only thing I can think of.</p> <p>Researcher: What do you think he feels about you and the relationship you have</p>	<p><u>Familiarity</u></p> <p>Description of his difficulties and need to be positive</p> <p><u>Need to be calm</u></p> <p><u>Caring for him</u></p> <p><i>Making sure everything is ok</i></p> <p><u>Her role is to make things better – is nurturing</u></p> <p><i>Happy, he is always happy</i></p> <p><u>Happiness linked to safety</u></p>
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<p>Position as parent - Nurturing and protecting role 400</p> <p>Frustration</p> <p>410 Rewards are when he connects to her with a smile</p>	<p>with him?</p> <p>BETH: I do not know, I do not really know. I do not know if it's a ... I think he knows ... I think he just knows that I am there to look after him. I do not think he would think any more than that.</p> <p>When he looks for me, like in the dinner hall, and he gives me a big smile, actually, when I ... this will just say, I suppose in B's way, when I come in in the morning, sometimes if we have had the day before and I have felt that I have got frustrated with him and I think, ooh has he picked up I have got frustrated, and I come in the next morning, and I say, Good morning B, how are you this morning and he gives me a massive grin and I think, would he do that if he had not formed that? I am not sure, I cannot ... I have not worked it out. But he does, he gives me the most beautiful smile.</p> <p>Researcher: How does that make you feel?</p>	<p><i>I am there to look after him</i></p> <p><u>Her nurturing role to look after him</u></p> <p><i>He looks for me</i></p> <p><u>Dependence on her – he is searching for her</u></p> <p><u>Frustration she feels – she worries about her frustration and how it affects him</u></p> <p><i>The most beautiful smile</i></p> <p><u>She sees his smile as approval in the relationship</u></p>
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<p>Pride in doing a good job</p>	<p>BETH: Really, really good, really good.</p> <p>I think well it cannot all be bad. I must have done something right.</p>	<p><i>It cannot be all bad</i></p> <p><i>I must have done something right</i></p>
<p>420</p>	<p>Researcher: And, I suppose, how do you feel about your relationship with him?</p>	<p><u>Her feelings of inadequacy – anxiety about not being good enough</u></p>
<p>Attachment</p>	<p>BETH: I have got ... I have worked with children before but I get very attached</p>	<p><i>I get very attached</i></p>
<p>Empathy needed 430 Closeness</p>	<p>Researcher: Sorry, to him in particular or generally ...</p> <p>BETH: Yes, generally, I have worked with another child, this is my second one-to-one child but I do get ... I think to do this sort of job, you have got to be very empathetic and I am that, particularly with the children that I work with closely.</p> <p>Researcher: To him particularly?</p>	<p><u>Attachment and investing in the relationship is important</u></p> <p><i>You have got to be very empathetic</i></p> <p><u>Personal closeness is important</u></p>

<p>Positive description of him</p> <p>440</p> <p>450</p>	<p>BETH: I really like B, I think he is a lovely boy, he is not naughty, he is kind, he is just a very nice little boy and it would be very difficult, when you meet him not to have a bond with him, he is just very nice.</p> <p>Researcher: And, I think you said that you had to prepare him for change, for a new LSA?</p> <p>BETH: Yes.</p> <p>Researcher: Am I right in thinking that you will not be working with him?</p> <p>BETH: No, I ...</p> <p>Researcher: And I suppose the obvious question is then, how does that make you feel?</p> <p>BETH: Yes.</p> <p>Researcher: Do you think about that?</p>	<p>Describes his personality as being <i>nice</i></p>
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<p>Important to know about the child – to invest in that knowledge</p> <p>Feelings of sadness at separating – attachment</p> <p>Her feelings of inadequacy</p> <p>460 His need to be nurtured – position as parent</p> <p>Anxiety about him being looked after</p> <p>470</p> <p>Anxiety about getting it right</p>	<p>BETH: No, I do and I have worked a lot in trying to make sure that the other ladies that I know that will be working with him, know a lot about him. It does make me feel very sad because you wonder, you know, in fact ... I say to them, you will be much better than me, you will be really good, but there is that part that makes you think, is he going to be ... oh silly ... but he will be looked after, but you will always wonder whether he will be, because, will they understand he means this and I have been working with them to say, if he does this, he means this, if he is looking worried about something it could be because of this, this and this. So I try and tell all the things that I picked up and actually I ... when I first came for the first six months, I say first six months, actually about the first four months, I kept a diary, every day, for my benefit here at school just to write a few details about each lesson and what ... how he was doing and I have</p>	<p><u>She feels it is important to know a lot about him</u></p> <p><i>It does make me feel sad</i></p> <p><i>You will be much better than me, you will be very good</i></p> <p><u>Sense of her feelings of inadequacy</u></p> <p><i>He will be looked after</i></p> <p><u>Doesn't she feel she looks after him well enough?</u></p> <p><u>Her anxiety about him being looked after</u></p> <p><i>I kept a diary</i></p> <p><u>Her anxiety about getting it right</u></p>
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<p>480</p>	<p>actually passed that on to the new LSAs to just show the sorts of things I was doing with him so that they understand and that they can, perhaps, it might help them.</p>	<p><u>Her need to help the new LSAs is as strong as her need to help B</u></p>
<p>Attachment – this is important to her</p>	<p>Researcher: In that diary was there anything about the relationship with him that you would have passed on or verbally, if you talked to them, communicate things about, like you have talked about today?</p>	
<p>490</p>	<p>BETH: I always say how lovely he is and how easy it is to form an attachment with him, I say that to them quite often. I do not know whether it was more</p>	<p><i>Easy to form an attachment</i></p> <p><u>Attachment is important to her</u></p>
<p>His relationship difficulties with others – social issues</p>	<p>probably work based, the diary, more than relationship based but there probably were relationship issues, maybe not with me but with other children in it, playtimes, because we were working on then about how to try and solve some of his problems in the playground that he had been having. More than about me</p>	<p><u>Work versus relationship - her different roles as TA and ‘parent’?</u></p> <p><i>To try and solve some of his problems</i></p> <p><u>It is her responsibility to</u></p>

<p>500</p> <p>TA role to support him</p>	<p>and him. It was more work based, it would be, maths was tricky, found this particular thing difficult and then he went out playtime and he was pushing Ben or whoever and I asked him to stop and I explained to him what had happened, it was that kind of thing that was written in it, so that they had an idea of what the sort of things that had happened.</p>	<p><u>solve his problems</u></p> <p><u>Her role as TA</u></p>
<p>510</p>	<p>Researcher: Is there anything else about your experience of working with B, particularly about the relationship you have developed with him that you can tell me about?</p> <p>BETH: Very difficult to know from what I have said before. It is very tricky to think off the top of your head, to think that there will be probably many things that I should say, but I cannot think of them. Just to say, it is mainly to do with his understanding and how I can interpret, I suppose, the things that he</p>	
<p>His difficulties with understanding</p> <p>520</p> <p>Her role is to interpret things</p>	<p>does and the way he does them. I know</p>	<p>Describes his understanding</p> <p><i>And how I can interpret...</i></p> <p><u>Her role as mediator</u></p>

<p>he does – she is a mediator</p> <p>Special relationship</p> <p>530</p> <p>Her role is unique in understanding his needs</p> <p>540</p> <p>His obsession with certain people – his attachment to them</p>	<p>he has a delayed reaction to certain things, I know that it would take him just a little bit longer to respond to something and that is something that the others, I suppose if you do not work with them closely, you would not really understand, so it is just very small things that you know as an LSA, you pick up on and I have certainly picked up on quite a few issues that I think, well ... not just issues, but points about his condition that I suppose, I just had that understanding.</p> <p>Researcher: What would they be?</p> <p>Those kind of things? In his condition.</p> <p>BETH: Well, they would be the fact that he gets very obsessive about particular people, when he forms an attachment to somebody, particularly friendships, I have noticed, he gets very anxious about those people. I have not noticed it with me but with his friends, it would be, say for example, we have got a little girl that he really, really, really likes, he</p>	<p><u>Her role as LSA – her unique role in understanding his needs</u></p> <p>Description of his needs and obsession</p> <p><i>Forms an attachment</i></p> <p><u>Attachment again used and is important to her</u></p> <p><i>He gets very anxious about those people</i></p> <p><u>His anxiety</u></p> <p><u>But not with her – he feels safe with her</u></p>
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<p>His anxiety</p> <p>550</p> <p>He is safe with her</p> <p>Her role as a mediator</p> <p>560</p>	<p>particularly likes her and she cut her finger once, just a little paper cut and it bled and he virtually passed out, he got very, very anxious about it. Now I have ... I was not aware that he would ... that this would happen, I soon realised ... at first, you just, I thought he had come over and he would say, no I have come over funny and he was putting his head between his legs and actually it ... what it was and then he kept mentioning the cut, she has hurt her finger, she has hurt her finger and I said, you worried about her? She is okay, we had to show that she was okay and that she was going to be alright but he was in quite a state, if somebody cuts their leg or hurts themselves in some way, particularly if he has got a strong bond, he is so empathetic towards them that he cannot cope. At the beginning, if we had a child that was sent out of class because they had been naughty, he would be worried about them. Not so much anymore but he still does not like it if they have been told off and the child has</p>	<p>Description of his anxiety</p> <p><u>Her role as mediator between him and the girl</u></p> <p><i>If he has got a strong bond, he is so empathetic towards them that he cannot cope</i></p> <p><u>Idea that his empathy overwhelms him</u></p>
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<p>570</p> <p>His strong attachment to certain people</p> <p>Empathy – can be overwhelming</p>	<p>been told off and they have been sent out,</p> <p>he is very concerned and the concentration levels go, because he is so concerned for their welfare and that they are okay. I think those bonds are quite strong, he obviously ... and then he follows them ... this little girl, he had actually ... I was talking to another LSA yesterday about it, we were saying for about four months he had forgotten about</p>	<p><i>Those bonds are quite strong</i></p> <p><u>Bonds – attachments</u></p> <p><u>These are important for him and her</u></p>
<p>580</p> <p>Bonds – attachments between him and others</p>	<p>her and then he found her again and he literally wonders around and he flutters his eyelashes and she ignores him and it seems the more she ignores him the more he is almost playing hard to get, he just loves her so much and he wants to be with her to the point she was sitting behind him in the hall, I think it was yesterday or the day before, it must have been yesterday, he was turning around and trying to talk to her.</p>	<p><i>He is playing hard to get, he just loves her so much</i></p> <p><u>Strong emotional language of attachment – her joy in him making these relationships</u></p>
<p>590</p>	<p>Researcher: And when that happens, you see something like that, how does that make you feel?</p>	

<p>Emotional language of attachment</p>	<p>BETH: It amazes me that I am actually really pleased with it. It is not always appropriate, like in the hall, they are not supposed to be turning around and chatting, but because he finds it so hard, I would personally be willing to turn a blind eye to it within a certain reason provided he was not doing ... because it is so difficult for him. I suppose that is where my relationship again, pulls in because you are looking at it through different eyes, not always the professional down the line which you have to be but you are looking at it through ... B finds this really hard, for him this is a big deal, he is talking to somebody, he wants to make friends with them, he wants to be their friend, providing that when it does start to get, if he constantly bombards her then we have to try and find him other things to do so that ... but to a degree, if she does not mind, then I am quite happy for him to try to form a friendship because it would</p>	<p><i>It amazes me that I am actually really pleased with it</i></p> <p><u>Why? Is she jealous of his relationship with others?</u></p> <p><u>Her role as mediator – she knows best about what’s right for him</u></p> <p><i>my relationship again, pulls in because you are looking at it through different eyes</i></p> <p><i>not always the professional down the line</i></p> <p><u>The conflict in her roles as professional LSA and ‘parent’</u></p>
<p>600</p> <p>Her role is to interpret for him – to mediate</p>	<p>610</p>	
<p>Her unique role</p> <p>Her role shifts – not always professional TA</p>	<p>then I am quite happy for him to try to form a friendship because it would</p>	<p><i>Then I am quite happy</i></p> <p><u>She gives her</u></p>

	<p>be important to him.</p> <p>Researcher: Okay, we are done.</p>	<p><u>permission</u></p>
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Initial Themes	Original transcript	Exploratory Comments
<p data-bbox="240 712 443 817">TA position as mediator</p> <p data-bbox="240 1077 276 1111">10</p> <p data-bbox="240 1666 448 1917">Keeps her distance but looking out for him</p> <p data-bbox="240 1957 276 1991">20</p>	<p data-bbox="509 342 1046 528">Researcher: Fine, so can you tell just the beginning just a little bit about the work that you do the child you work with?</p> <p data-bbox="509 636 1046 1261">CLARE: Well at the moment I just work with him in the afternoons so I am avoiding the Maths and English at the moment which makes life a lot easier. So I generally support him in the afternoons so it is usually more practical things. Science or art and that sort of thing and I am one to one with him at playtime as well.</p> <p data-bbox="509 1368 1031 1554">Researcher: Tell me a little bit about that in terms of what you do with him at playtime or break time?</p> <p data-bbox="509 1662 1046 1995">CLARE: At playtime I try not to sort of interfere with him at all I try and keep an eye on him and watch who he is playing with. He is quite a sensory little boy so I have to watch, he likes to go and squeeze</p>	<p data-bbox="1072 786 1326 891">Describes her work with C</p> <p data-bbox="1072 1666 1342 1845"><i>I try not to sort of interfere with him at all</i></p> <p data-bbox="1072 1957 1294 1995"><u>Keeps a distance</u></p>

<p>Describes his sensory difficulties</p> <p>30</p>	<p>other children and lift up their legs and other strange things. He also likes to put things in his mouth a lot.</p> <p>Researcher: And thinking about, particularly I want to think about your relationship with him, can I ask how long you have worked with?</p> <p>CLARE: A year.</p> <p>Researcher: Okay, so thinking about that year you worked with him, how would you describe your relationship with him and tell me about your relationship with him.</p>	<p>Describes needs as sensory</p> <p><i>And other strange things</i></p> <p><u>Use of ‘strange’ – idea of normality / abnormality</u></p>
<p>Good relationship but this is a result of when she supports him</p> <p>40</p>	<p>CLARE: I would say that we have got a good relationship. I do think that it has improved by the fact that I do not have to do the Maths and English with him now so it is quite limited the amount of written work that I have to get out of him and that definitely helps.</p>	<p><i>Good relationship</i></p> <p>Describes support with him</p> <p><u>Impact on maths and English on supporting him</u></p>

<p>His difficulties with writing affect the relationship</p>	<p>Researcher: How does that affect your relationship?</p> <p>CLARE: The first term</p> <p>Researcher: You have worked with him previously?</p> <p>CLARE: Yes I have and so I know the difference.</p> <p>Researcher: Right okay interesting.</p>	<p><i>I know the difference</i></p> <p>What difference?</p>
<p>Her position as good cop</p> <p>50</p> <p>Her position as mediator between him and the teacher</p>	<p>CLARE: I think I am probably good cop whereas my counterpart in the mornings is possibly bad cop. Also we do have a good relationship but he knows that the teacher is where the buck stops. So she will step in and say to him “no you have got to be quiet now” and he will take far more notice of her than he will of me.</p> <p>Yes what else?</p> <p>Researcher: In terms, I am just thinking about that relationship, how that has</p>	<p><i>I am probably good cop</i></p> <p><u>Her role is seen as ‘good’ and ‘positive’</u></p> <p><i>He knows that the teacher is where the buck stops</i></p> <p><u>Her role is defined – she doesn’t have the power of the teacher</u></p>

60	<p>developed because it sounds like you have gone from supporting him during his maths and literacy.</p> <p>CLARE: Well I was still full-time with him.</p> <p>Researcher: Right you were full-time with him. So tell me a little bit about that when you were full-time with him and then really tell me a little bit of how that has been changed or is different now.</p>	<p><i>He will take far more notice of her than he will of me</i></p> <p><u>Feelings of</u></p> <p><u>disempowerment –</u></p> <p><u>he doesn’t take as much notice of her</u></p> <p>Describes her role in support – was full time but now part time</p>
70		<p><i>Working full-time</i></p>
<p>Feels</p> <p>disempowered –</p> <p>detached from</p> <p>him</p> <p>Hardship and</p> <p>demands of the</p> <p>relationship</p> <p>when full time</p> <p>80</p>	<p>CLARE: To be honest I found working full- time with him really quite full on and so that is why I asked to cut back a little bit with him. I did not think it was productive for him either to have somebody for the full time and play times, because I felt a bit frazzled by the end of the day to be quite honest which you know is not the best thing for him or me, is it.</p>	<p><i>really full on...I asked to cut back a little</i></p> <p><u>She was finding it</u></p> <p><u>difficult –</u></p> <p><u>overwhelming</u></p> <p><i>I felt a bit frazzled by the end of the day</i></p> <p><u>Idea of being worn</u></p> <p><u>out / fatigued by their</u></p> <p><u>relationship</u></p>

<p>His difficulties with writing</p> <p>Found it difficult / demanding</p> <p>Challenging behaviour</p> <p>90</p> <p>100</p>	<p>Researcher: And what was the particular difficulty in maths and literacy?</p> <p>CLARE: He is just not very keen on recording, he struggles with writing, with recording information so it does not matter if it is maths or literacy, it is the recording of it that he struggles with a bit. So if you are the one physically sitting there the one having to get it out of him then it can be quite challenging and he can be quite physical and quite grabby and he will often turn it into a physical thing. He will start saying “ow you hurt me” when you have not, it is just that you are making him do something that he does not want to do.</p> <p>Researcher: And how has that changed then. How is your relationship I suppose been helped to develop over the time because you said it was different now?</p> <p>CLARE: I think purely on a practical level because I have not, he does not</p>	<p><u>How it affected her and him</u></p> <p>Describes difficulties in maths and literacy especially recording</p> <p><i>Challenging</i></p> <p><i>Quite physical</i></p> <p><i>Turn it into a physical thing</i></p> <p><u>Her defensiveness</u></p> <p><u>both physically and emotionally</u></p> <p><u>A battle</u></p> <p><u>Idea of the barrier of writing having been removed for her to</u></p>
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<p>Battle with him</p> <p>110</p> <p>120</p>	<p>have to do so much written work with me now that tends to be in the mornings.</p> <p>Researcher: And that is where the kind of conflict was? That is where it is mainly?</p> <p>CLARE: A lot of the time yes definitely. I think that is becoming more evident as he gets older.</p> <p>Researcher: Okay.</p> <p>CLARE: Obviously further up the school the more work is expected of him in the mainstream school.</p> <p>Researcher: So thinking of times when things have gone well in your relationship with him, can you tell me a bit about that and maybe give me some examples please?</p> <p>CLARE: I will try. Well if he is doing something that he enjoys then he is great,</p>	<p><u>make it easier for her</u></p> <p><u>Idea of conflict</u></p> <p><u>getting worse as he gets older</u></p> <p>Description of the difficulty he has with work as he gets further up the school</p> <p><i>I will try</i></p> <p><u>This is an effort for her</u></p>
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<p>Frustration at lack of connection</p> <p>130</p>	<p>he does like doing things in quite short bursts. So something like art for example, he likes doing that but it will only take him five minutes probably to do something like that and he will need you there to make sure he is not doing something that he, you now he would quite happily pick up a paint brush and put it in his mouth to see what it tastes like and that sort of thing. So he does need somebody there the whole time.</p>	<p>Description of activities he does</p> <p><u>She struggles to talk about the relationship – it seems to be a barrier - a difficulty for her</u></p> <p><u>Reverts to descriptions of events</u></p>
<p>140</p> <p>Lack of emotional connection between them</p>	<p>Researcher: So, those kind of times when you feel that the relationship has been particularly good, what is it about that is there anything in particular about that time or that experience that sort of makes you think that that went well.</p> <p>CLARE: I mean really with a child like him when you get some feedback, some interaction because sometimes he is on another play and he does not engage at all with what you are doing, so when he can engage with the task and respond to</p>	<p><u>Hard to get her to talk about the relationship</u></p> <p><i>A child like him</i></p> <p><u>What kind of child is that? A difficult one?</u></p> <p><i>When you get some feedback, some interaction</i></p>

both	questions about a story for example or	
	whatever we are doing, it is great when	
	he can actually interact.	<u>This feels like a rare</u>
		<u>occurrence</u>
		<i>Does not engage at</i>
	Researcher: With you?	<i>all</i>
		<i>Is great when he can</i>
Conflict /battle	CLARE: Yes.	<i>actually interact</i>
150	Researcher: In terms of what	<u>Moments when he</u>
	particularly is important in that	<u>does engage – she</u>
	interaction?	<u>struggles to express</u>
		<u>the relationship</u>
		<u>positively</u>
Her role as	CLARE: Well I guess it just shows that	
mediator	we have managed to break the work	
	down into chunks that he can deal with	<u>She responds with a</u>
	and use for his own learning. He will be	<u>factual answer about</u>
	going into year 3 in September.	<u>work rather than a</u>
		<u>response about the</u>
	Researcher: Right.	<u>relationship</u>
He struggles	CLARE: So a lot of the work is a bit out	<u>Her role as a TA is</u>
160	of his reach really.	<u>functional – it is</u>
		<u>about work and</u>
	Researcher: Yes, that is potentially more	<u>supporting him not</u>
	difficult in terms of the relationship you	<u>developing a</u>

<p>Her role is more difficult</p> <p>170</p>	<p>might have as you said before.</p> <p>CLARE: Yes no, I can definitely see that becoming harder.</p> <p>Researcher: Right so obviously is that some of the concerns you have had about how that might affect how you work with him and your relationship with him or won't you be working with him?</p>	<p><u>relationship – she has found this very difficult</u></p> <p><u>And even that is difficult...</u></p> <p><u>Matter of fact – moving on from him.</u></p>
<p>Her detachment from him</p> <p>180</p>	<p>CLARE: I won't know. No I am not. I will probably move onto something else in September.</p> <p>Researcher: So you will not be working with him at all?</p> <p>CLARE: No.</p> <p>Researcher: So how does that make you feel if you are not going to work with him?</p> <p>CLARE: Well it's like a double edge</p>	<p><u>This isn't working for her</u></p> <p><i>I'm not very fond of him</i></p>

<p>Her feelings about him – lack of connection for her</p>	<p>sword I am not very fond of him, but by the same token I know that he is going to continue to struggle probably more and more the further up the school he gets.</p>	<p><u>She admits she isn't fond of him</u></p>
<p>Detachment from him</p>	<p>So he is still going to have two LSA's, we made the point that it is much better for him to have two different ones.</p>	<p><u>He's better off with others</u></p>
<p>190</p>	<p>Researcher: And why would that be do you think, what is the sort of thinking behind that?</p>	
<p>Her role as TA</p>	<p>CLARE: I think really some fresh person in the afternoons is definitely beneficial to him. He is not the sort of</p>	<p><u>She is happy to see him move on. It's better for him (and her)</u></p>
<p>Her detachment from him emotionally</p>	<p>child, he is not phased by new people, he is interested by them. He is not phased or worried by them. So I think it is probably more stimulating for him to have different faces around.</p>	<p><i>Probably more stimulating for him</i></p>
<p>200</p>	<p>Researcher: And those times you have talked about when things have been quite difficult particularly in the earlier days when you were doing the maths and</p>	<p><u>She hasn't been able to stimulate him – the relationship hasn't been stimulating</u></p>

	literacy, please tell me a bit more about those times and why they were difficult and how they affected your relationship with him in particular?	
His difficulties connecting emotionally 210	CLARE: I think the most difficult thing is to know that he is not into what you are trying to do with him at all and it can be very repetitive particularly with numeracy, we are still reinforcing the basics. Researcher: Right.	<i>He's not into what you are trying to do with him</i> <u>Difficulties in connecting with him</u>
Her role as teacher		
Her frustrations at his progress	CLARE: Or you know there is very very small amounts of progressions, so I think that is frustrating for me and for him. Researcher: Right, frustrating in what sense?	<i>Very, very small amounts of progressions</i> <u>His lack of progress is frustrating for her and him – she puts</u>
Frustrated about progress 220	CLARE: I suppose because sometimes it feels like there is very little progression and particularly in a mainstream school, sometimes you are banging on about the	<u>this onto him</u> <i>Very little progression</i> <i>Banging on about the</i>
Repetitive/boring –frustrations		

with his progress	same things, do you know what I mean, to get to an end goal with him.	<i>same things</i>
His lack of connection emotionally and socially	<p>Researcher: And then how do you feel</p> <p>CLARE: No I was just going to say and at the end of the day he would far rather be playing with beans or whatever it is he is into playing with at the moment.</p>	<p><i>To get to an end goal with him</i></p> <p><u>She is focussed on his progress or lack of it – causes her frustration</u></p>
<p>230</p> <p>Impersonal – lack of connection</p>	<p>Researcher: What do you think he feels about your relationship, do you have any idea what he thinks?</p> <p>CLARE: I do not know you will have to get the children to interview them. I</p>	<p>Describes what he prefers</p> <p><u>He prefers things to people</u></p> <p><i>I think he likes me</i></p>
<p>He likes her</p> <p>240</p>	<p>think he likes me, I think he likes most of us. He is a very happy little boy. From time to time he will say “I do not like such and such a teacher” or LSA or whatever but I do not think there is anything in that.</p> <p>Researcher: Has he said that about you?</p>	<p><i>I think he likes most of us</i></p> <p><u>She doesn’t feel anything strong in this relationship</u></p>

<p>Impersonal responses</p>	<p>CLARE: He has not said that to me about me but he might have said it to somebody else about me. You know he will say from time to time about the class teacher “I do not like Miss N” but I do not think there is anything in that she probably wanted him to do something that he did not want to do I would imagine.</p>	<p><i>He might have said it to somebody else about me</i></p> <p><u>She doesn’t feel sure about this</u></p>
<p>250</p>	<p>Researcher: So thinking about your relationship over the year that you worked with C what sort of sense do you make out of it, what does it mean to you?</p> <p>CLARE: Oh that is a very deep one is it not? What do you mean?</p>	<p><u>Factual responses –</u></p> <p><u>she doesn’t really describe how it makes her feel</u></p> <p><u>She struggles to connect to emotional language and feelings</u></p>
<p>260</p> <p>She feels some enjoyment in the relationship</p>	<p>Researcher: what does the relationship mean to you, what have you got out of it and the sense you have got out of that relationship and the meaning?</p> <p>CLARE: I have really enjoyed it, there are definitely times when it is quite</p>	<p><i>Enjoyed it but</i></p>

<p>Her anxiety about being good enough</p> <p>Feels pride in his response</p> <p>270</p> <p>Frustration at lack of connection</p>	<p>tough and you just think “oh my goodness I do not think I am doing the right thing for him” when you are trying to get something through to him and he is clearly not engaging at all. But then there are other times...you know a light bulb moment when he does respond which is quite rewarding when he does, but to be honest it is quite short lived, those sort of times.</p>	<p>qualifies this with it being tough</p> <p><u>Her own insecurities about whether she’s doing the right thing</u></p> <p><i>He’s clearly not engaging at all</i></p> <p><u>Is it about him engaging or her not feeling she has to engage with him?</u></p>
<p>Her anxiety for him</p>	<p>Researcher: Oh right.</p> <p>CLARE: And again I think that is normal as the year has progressed and I can see it being harder for him in the...I do worry for him.</p>	<p><i>Light bulb moment....but to be honest it is quite short lived</i></p>
<p>280</p> <p>His relationship with adults</p>	<p>Researcher: And that worry is, am I right in saying in him coping or is it his relationship with other people or if...</p> <p>CLARE: No I do not really worry about...he is quite an engaging boy so I do think his relationship with adults, he</p>	<p><u>Negative attitude to him and their relationship</u></p> <p><u>Normality?</u></p> <p><i>I do worry for him</i></p> <p><u>Anxiety about his future</u></p>

<p>His social difficulties</p> <p>290</p>	<p>will be fine there. With other children, I do worry a bit about him there. At the moment he is in a split class and he tends to hang around with the younger children. So he is in with the year 1's. So he generally would choose to go and be with them. They are young enough to put up with him.</p> <p>Researcher: Yes.</p> <p>CLARE: I think his own peer group is possibly not as patient in that.</p> <p>Researcher: Is there anything else about this sort of experience of working with him over the past year that you can tell me about?</p>	<p><i>His relationships with adults he will be fine there</i></p> <p><u>Her worry about his relationships with other children</u></p> <p><i>To put up with him</i></p> <p><u>This language is suggesting he is difficult and that relationships are difficult with him</u></p>
<p>His sensory needs</p> <p>300</p>	<p>CLARE: Well the big thing with this child is his sensory needs which seem to be becoming more and more prominent and at times a bit overwhelming and we do not have the space or the resources to deal with that here.</p>	<p><i>This child</i></p> <p><u>She has difficulty in using his name and connecting with him.</u></p> <p><u>She puts distance</u></p>

		<u>between her and him</u>
His sensory difficulties	Researcher: Can you give me any examples of how that impacts on what you are doing?	Description of his difficulties
310	CLARE: Well he is quite peculiar, his needs are...he loves to touch things and feel things, but sometimes he cannot bear to touch or feel things. Sometimes he is quite happy to sit and put his hands in, we find all sorts of funny things for him in the classroom and he likes to just lie on the carpet. He likes to have something on top of him as he is lying, like a heavy cushion or something like that. We do not really have...I do not feel that we have the right equipment or space to be able to cater for those needs.	<u>She reverts back to factual descriptions of his needs – his deficits</u>
Him being different		<i>He is quite peculiar</i>
Can't meet this needs		<u>Issue about him being different / strange</u>
320	And I do think he does quite small chunks of work with a reward at the end and I think it would possibly be easier with him if there was somewhere that he could go for that 10 minutes 20 minutes off sensory reward.	Description of his needs and sensory needs
		<u>Feeling of not being able to give him what he needs</u>
		<u>Not meeting his sensory needs</u>

<p>330</p> <p>Her frustrations with the relationship</p> <p>Can't help him</p> <p>His demands are beyond her help</p> <p>340</p>	<p>Researcher: So finally, how do you sort of feel about that then in terms of that you are talking about things that you know...</p> <p>CLARE: I find it quite frustrating.</p> <p>Researcher: Yes right in what sense?</p> <p>CLARE: I think myself and the other lady who works with him we feel that we cannot fulfil those needs</p> <p>Researcher: Right.</p> <p>CLARE: and he is constantly wanting more and I think some of the time that is why he does go and touches other children and he likes to play with their hair and lifting legs is a big thing at the moment.</p> <p>Researcher: Does he just do that with other children or does he do that with adults or in your relationship?</p>	<p><u>Frustration</u></p> <p><i>Cannot fulfil those needs</i></p> <p><u>Feelings of not being able to give him what he needs emotionally</u></p> <p><i>Wanting more</i></p> <p><u>Can't give him enough</u></p>
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	<p>CLARE: He does not do the leg lifting with adults but the touching yes he does.</p> <p>Researcher: Okay thank you very much that is absolutely brilliant.</p>	
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Initial Themes	Original transcript	Exploratory Comments
<p>10</p> <p>Description of him as being confident and independent</p> <p>Positive – he is lovely</p> <p>20</p> <p>Her role to mediate – step in</p>	<p>Researcher: Okay, so first of all, what I would like to do is just ask you about the one-to-one support. Tell me a little bit about your work with this child and what you do.</p> <p>DENA: Well I started working with him, after Christmas, so it's been quite, not for very long. But he is very...independent because he is in year six now, so he has got to the point where he is quite independent. He is also quite...confident in the class. He is happy to sit with anyone, interact with anyone. He is...yes, he is lovely really. so, yes, lovely. The only thing is he really does need more help with is things like PE and maths and things that he knows he is not as strong at and that is when you sort of, that is when I have to sort of step in and help him but he is, he is very independent. He is very, if he knows he can do it, it</p>	<p>Describes the type of child he is</p> <p><i>Independent Confident</i></p> <p><i>Yes, he is lovely really</i></p> <p><u>Positive image immediately</u></p> <p><i>I have to sort of step in and help him</i></p> <p><u>Repeating independent emphasise this</u></p>

<p>Rejection – wants her to go away</p> <p>30</p> <p>He pushes her away</p> <p>He doesn't want support</p> <p>Emphasising how lovely he is</p> <p>40</p>	<p>is: "no I'm fine" and sort of wants you to go away.. So he can get on with it.</p> <p>He has just being doing the year six production and with something he was stressing about was...doing his apron up because he is a chef. But he got to the point where he is like: "no, I've got it, its fine, go away, it's you know done". So once he knows he can do something he does not really want your support, which can backfire a little bit, especially with maths. If he thinks he has got the right answer, he is like "no look at that again". No, once he is sure he is sure. But no, he is lovely, he is lovely to work with, very, he is very chatty as well actually. Yes lovely.</p> <p>Researcher: And do you support him at break times?</p> <p>DENA: No.</p>	<p><u>Doesn't need her</u></p> <p><u>Using direct quotes – assumes his voice</u></p> <p><i>He does not really want your support, which can backfire a little bit</i></p> <p><u>He really does need her support</u></p> <p><i>Repetition of lovely</i></p> <p><u>Emphasis of how lovely he is</u></p>
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<p>50</p> <p>He is independent</p> <p>Confident</p> <p>60</p> <p>He supports her – tells her about how things work</p> <p>Building a relationship – he’s her guide</p> <p>Her role is as</p>	<p>Researcher: Okay, so you do not have any experience of what he is like at break times? Okay, so I want to talk about your, in particular, your relationship with him over the time that you worked with him. So, can you tell me a little bit about that relationship that you formed during the time you have worked with him?</p> <p>DENA: Well with D, he is very...welcoming. He is sort of takes. He appears to take everything in his stride. Sometimes he does not always but you know he knows to just, he calls, sort of gets on with it. So when I first started working with him, he was, I think quite enjoyed explaining how things work as I have not been in year six before. So he was telling me about their routine and we sort of...started at that point, building a relationship, so he was sort of guiding me through things. Then I had the chance for me to</p>	<p><i>Welcoming</i></p> <p><i>Takes everything in his stride</i></p> <p><u>Confidence and independence</u></p> <p><u>He is supporting her</u></p> <p><i>He was sort of guiding me through</i></p> <p><u>Her role is the learner</u></p>
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<p>the learner</p> <p>Role shifts to her then being the guide 70</p> <p>Shifting relationship and roles</p> <p>Shifting control in the relationship</p> <p>80</p> <p>Togetherness – teamwork</p> <p>90</p>	<p>guide him through some of the subjects, maths questions particularly.</p> <p>It's because he could then put his little bit: "oh no this is how we do it" but how they set it out. He was much happier for me to then say, actually no let us go back, let us do this one again.</p> <p>Because he had his chance. I do not know if that makes sense? And he did initiate, he does not always, still, but he did initially sort of hesitate to say when he was worried about something, so he would say: "yes I'm fine, yes I can do it", but then he would go home and tell his mum that obviously he was stressing about it but he had not conveyed it. So there is one thing here that they had to get pen licences for their handwriting. And he had got it in his head: "no I'm not getting a pen licence". Because he did not think his handwriting was good enough and we sort of talked him through - we are just going to take it up, it will be fine. Got</p>	<p><u>Role back to her as TA</u></p> <p><u>Relationship to and fro as to who is the lead role</u></p> <p><i>Because he had his chance</i> <u>She is letting him take control but stepping in when she needs to</u></p> <p><i>When he was worried about something</i></p> <p><i>Go home and tell his mum that obviously he was stressing about it</i> <u>Does he trust her?</u> <u>Does she trust him when he says he's fine?</u></p> <p><u>Negative view of himself.</u></p> <p><i>we sort of talked him through - we are just going to take it up, it will be fine</i> <u>Reassuring language - Teamwork / together</u></p>
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<p>Distrust in the relationship</p> <p>Role of TA shifting</p> <p>100</p> <p>Trust in each other</p> <p>110</p> <p>Her role as TA – supporting him through</p>	<p>to that point where he had agreed to it, but then gone home and told his mum, last time we were stressed about it. So we sort of had to...stop. So it is, but he has, in this last week. He did start coming up and saying: "oh, actually, I'm a bit nervous about this and I'm a bit nervous about that". So hopefully that means it is a bit more comfortable to say things he is worried about, now. But yes, because I have only been with him, since after Christmas, it has been quite quickly having to do it because we had SATS. So you had sort of get him to trust in, sort of the coping mechanisms thing. I was trying to get him to do to get through the SATS paper, so he wouldn't move on. If he got stuck on one and trying to, so we had to work quite quickly to get him to trust to try what I was saying, so...</p> <p>Researcher: So that, sorry that trust is then about not just him trusting being</p>	<p><u>Again an element of distrust in the relationship?</u></p> <p><u>Roles of TA and Mum</u></p> <p><u>She feels more empowered that he will say how he feels</u></p> <p>Description of her time with him having been short</p> <p><i>So you had sort of get him to trust in, sort of the coping mechanisms thing</i></p> <p><u>Trust in each other</u></p> <p><u>Her role as TA being to support him</u></p> <p><u>Trust</u></p>
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<p>120 His view is black and white – not much room for flexibility</p> <p>Trust / mistrust</p> <p>130</p> <p>Trust in another person’s</p>	<p>able to do the work, but are you saying that, trusting what you are saying?</p> <p>Right, can you tell me a little bit more about that?</p> <p>DENA: Well, It is sort of, in, when he does not, he has sort of got a black and white view of seeing something, so something works, something does not work and it is, he would appreciate oh that is your opinion for doing it but he does not trust that you necessarily know that that is a good way for him to do it. Does that make sense?</p> <p>Researcher: Absolutely.</p> <p>DENA: So it has been like actually no you might have a point maybe I should try that, instead of him thinking: "well I know what I can do, I know what works for me". So it is trusting that, you know, maybe someone else might have another view.</p>	<p>Description of how he views things</p> <p><i>Black and white</i> <u>Absolute – definite view</u></p> <p><i>Appreciate oh that is your opinion but he does not trust that you necessarily know that that is a good way for him to do it</i></p> <p><u>Idea of trust and mistrust</u></p> <p><i>You might have a point</i></p> <p><u>It seems important to her that he respects her view</u></p> <p><i>trusting that, you know, maybe someone else might have another view.</i></p>
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<p>viewpoint</p> <p>140</p> <p>His anxiety about the pen licence</p> <p>He opens up to her but after a long time</p> <p>150</p> <p>Being good enough</p>	<p>Researcher: So when you think about specifically, during the time you have worked with him. Think about things that when your relationship has gone really well, or not well, can you sort of tell me about those times?</p> <p>DENA: Well there is, it sounds really a bit of a thing but because he has been worried about it since, really, I started working with him, the pen licence thing has been putting him off going up to see it because he is worried. It took a long time to get him to tell me what the actual reason was and it was not because he didn't think his writing was good enough because...we told him because I work with X as well she is with him in the afternoons. I do not know if you have spoken to, yes. So I was trying to talk to him about, you know, he is good enough, you got to go up. But it took him a long time to then</p>	<p>Description of his concerns about going up to get a pen licence</p> <p><i>He has been worried about it</i></p> <p><i>Because he is worried</i></p> <p><u>His anxiety about the pen licence and telling her about his worries</u></p> <p><u>Expressing feelings of frustration that he's good enough but is holding back</u></p> <p><i>He is good enough, you got to go up</i></p>
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<p>She personally connects using his voice – articulates his worries 160</p> <p>Opening up his feelings to her Trusting her</p> <p>Honesty and trust in each other 170</p> <p>He connects with his anxiety and empathises with him</p> <p>180</p>	<p>say: "actually what I'm worried about is her saying no", even though you are telling me that it would probably be a yes. You are not the one giving me the pen licence, so I am worried that she will still say no. So that was quite a thing, because he is quite, he would just say: "yes I'm fine" if he is not that comfortable with you, just be yes, yes, okay I'm fine. And he will not actually say what the real reason was. So that was quite good. Quite a breakthrough that he was honest and said, not honest as in he lies about it, but you know, that he actually said everything that was troubling him about it. And then, yes it was yesterday, he, they were all going up to get their, well all the ones had not had their pen licence yet, so he went up to get it. Oh no he was supposed to get his things to go and get it and he came to say: "I'm really worried about it", which is something he had not really done before with</p>	<p><u>His worries about feeling a failure or rejection</u></p> <p><u>She uses his voice to articulate her thoughts – she tries to get inside his head?</u></p> <p><u>You are not the one giving me the pen licence very direct language – it's not you that makes the decision</u></p> <p><u>He is opening up his feelings to her</u></p> <p><u>Quite a breakthrough that he was honest</u> <u>Honesty is important to her – the trust in their relationship</u></p> <p><u>He talks about personal things to her</u></p> <p><u>She has invested a lot in this and feels his sense of failure</u></p>
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<p>Opening up his feelings to her Feeling confident to talk to her</p>	<p>comments. Normally I would ask if he is all right and that is when it would happen. He came up to me and asked or said: "I'm really not happy about it" or "I'm not feeling that confident about it, I really do not want to go". So that was quite a big thing for him to come to me. Normally I have to sort of see he is not that happy, but yes.</p>	<p>Description of how he expresses his feelings to her</p> <p><u>This is important that he expresses his feelings to her – it is honest and trusting</u></p> <p><i>He is not that happy</i> <u>Is this his usual state – not being happy? Is her job to make him happy?</u></p>
<p>190</p> <p>Generally he's good – it's a good relationship</p> <p>200</p>	<p>Researcher: And times when the relationship has been quite difficult? Can you have there been times when it has been difficult and if so can you tell me about?</p> <p>DENA: Not, no, not really. He is very good, so if you ask him to do something, he will do it. There are times when you get a bit of attitude when he does not want to do something, so in PE or they do fitness fun in the mornings trying to get him to run or, they have got these skateboards</p>	<p>Description of his usual behaviour</p> <p><i>He is very good</i> <i>He will do it</i></p> <p><i>A bit of attitude</i></p> <p><u>Generally he's well behaved</u></p>

<p>Her role as TA is to support him</p> <p>Independence 210</p>	<p>that they put their tummies on? And they go on it. I was getting, making sure he had his feet off of the floor to do it and he gets, it is not, it is not a big thing, because he drops it soonest, but he gets: "I am doing it, I am doing it properly" when you are trying to get him to do it. "No I'm doing it!" Then he gets a bit short with you. But other than that, he dropped it straightaway, straightaway, pretty much. You start talking about something else, he is fine? So...</p> <p>Researcher: And those times when you get a bit of attitude, how does that work in terms of your relationship? How does that work?</p>	<p><u>Her role to help him but he doesn't want help</u></p> <p><i>He gets a bit short with you</i> <u>He doesn't need her help</u></p> <p><u>Independence</u></p> <p><i>He dropped it straightaway</i> <u>He still needs her because he isn't very good at it</u></p>
<p>220</p> <p>Her role to help him</p>	<p>DENA: A lot of the time I keep trying to, you sort of keep going against his saying he is, so when he is saying he is keeping his knees off the floor or whatever or his feet - I am saying: "you</p>	<p><u>She knows better – she's there to help him and he needs help</u></p>

<p>Her role shifts from standing back observing to being tough with him</p> <p>230</p> <p>He doesn't like making mistakes</p> <p>Emphasises how nice he is despite his difficulties</p> <p>240</p>	<p>are not D, I can see you are not". So</p> <p>you push it a little bit there but there</p> <p>are certain things when he is with the</p> <p>class, I do tend to step back a little bit,</p> <p>because he does get a little, I think he</p> <p>gets a little bit more blue if he thinks</p> <p>everyone else can see that he is - he</p> <p>does not like making a mistake with</p> <p>something being wrong, so if he thinks</p> <p>everyone else can see that he has done</p> <p>something wrong and I am talking to</p> <p>him about it, he is, he is less, gets a bit</p> <p>more attitude. Yes, but I mean he is</p> <p>lovely. That he has been so nice to</p> <p>work with, there are not very many</p> <p>moments when it is difficult.</p> <p>Researcher: So the sort of description</p> <p>that you would give then of the time</p> <p>that you have worked with him of how</p> <p>your relationship has developed. What</p> <p>would you say about that?</p> <p>DENA: It started off he was quite...I</p>	<p><i>You can push it a little bit</i></p> <p><i>I do tend to step back</i></p> <p><u>Her role fluctuates – sometimes she has to be tough on him</u></p> <p><i>I think he gets a little bit more blue</i></p> <p><u>Depressed? Low?</u></p> <p>Description of how he feels if he makes a mistake</p> <p><u>Issue about how he feels when he gets something wrong</u></p> <p><u>She is there to support him</u></p> <p><i>He is lovely</i></p> <p><u>She qualifies her being negative about him</u></p>
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<p>The relationship has evolved – built up over time. 250</p>	<p>suppose like I was any other adult in the room. I was not really, I was not there just for him, so it was when he first met me, I think it was me very much going up to him checking if he was all right, talking through, sometimes reiterating any instructions to something, it was me approaching him and then with SATS it got a little bit more. He would ask, put his hand up and ask for help with certain things</p>	<p><u>She wasn't important?</u></p> <p>Description of their early relationship</p>
<p>Developing trust over time 260</p>	<p>which he would not have done before. He just sort of carried on. Because he does not like the idea of getting</p>	<p><u>Her role to check on him – monitor how he is</u></p> <p><u>Her role as supporting him</u></p> <p><u>Helping him</u></p>
<p>His difficulties with getting things wrong</p>	<p>something wrong, so, once it is done, he thinks he is sure that that is the right answer. So if he is confused he was starting to, that was about, Easter time, yes that was starting to happen. And then these last few weeks, because</p>	<p><i>He would not have done before</i></p> <p><u>Trust developing</u></p> <p>Description of how he doesn't like getting things wrong</p>
<p>Her role as support - mediator 270 His anxiety over change</p>	<p>obviously he is going off to secondary school. So we have been doing transition things and he has been much more sort of, coming to me and asking</p>	<p><u>Her role in helping with transition to new school</u></p>

<p>He trusts her and will talk to her about his anxieties about change</p> <p>280</p>	<p>me things because he is going to a different school to the majority of the other, in fact everyone in his class is going to X, he is going to Y, so he has been asking me things: "oh so would I be doing this?" When the children are talking about something at school that they will be doing next year - will that be me, so he sort of come to me to ask me things rather than me. So that is sort of how it has progressed.</p> <p>Researcher: And in terms of, I assume, am I right, in saying that you will not be working with him next year because he is going to second grade.</p> <p>DENA: Yes.</p> <p>Researcher: So how do you feel about that?</p> <p>DENA: It is quite sad because he is,</p>	<p><u>Anxiety he has over new school</u></p> <p><u>She is needed to help reduce his anxiety</u></p> <p><u>Anxiety about change – for him and her?</u></p> <p><u>She is needed by him to help his anxiety</u></p>
<p>290</p> <p>She has invested a lot</p>	<p>you do put quite a lot in to try and get</p>	<p><i>Quite sad</i></p> <p><i>You do put a lot in to try and get the</i></p>

<p>in the relationship</p> <p>Hard work in developing the relationship</p>	<p>the relationship with them and then, specially coming in sort of half way through the year, so you feel you do have to work because a lot of things do not work when you are trying to help them if you do not have the relationship there, so you have got to try and get that done quite quickly. I mean with D it was not that difficult</p>	<p><i>relationship with them</i> <u>Impersonal use of ‘them’ suggests distance from the effort she has put in and not wanted to make it too personal / emotional</u></p> <p><u>Issue of effort she has to put in to the relationship – it’s hard work</u></p>
<p>300</p> <p>Relationship has been hard work but rewarding</p>	<p>because he is so compliant, he will do, so any teacher he would do whatever they ask him to do. Because it has been quite a short time it does feel quite sad especially with all the transition things as well. I think in our ... it sort of brings it home to you a little bit because you are preparing him to do it, like “oh it will be good”. The last few weeks have all been preparing for</p>	<p>Description of him being compliant</p> <p><i>He would do whatever they ask him</i> <u>Relationship is not easy though – it is hard work for her</u></p>
<p>310</p>	<p>leaving which has been quite sad.</p> <p>Researcher: How do you think he feels about your relationship?</p>	<p><i>Sad</i> <u>Her emotions about moving on from working with him</u></p>

<p>She connects personally with him and feels she has invested a lot in their relationship</p> <p>Sometimes has to be tough</p> <p>320</p>	<p>DENA: I don't know. I would like to think he thought I was quite helpful.</p> <p>Probably thinks I am quite annoying at times especially when I say, "are you sure about that? Yes I am always sure, well that is not the right answer D so let's look at it again." So I think he, yes, he probably might think I get a bit annoying at times getting him to do things, but I would like to think he thinks "oh yes she has helped me". Hopefully.</p> <p>Researcher: Anything else you can think of?</p>	<p><i>Helpful</i></p> <p><i>Annoying at times</i></p> <p><u>Using her voice for him makes it personal</u></p> <p><u>Her role as being tough with him – getting him to do things</u></p>
<p>330</p> <p>Her anxiety to do a good job for him</p>	<p>DENA: No sure because it was very, because I have only been working with him for quite a short time and the LSA he had before that had been with him a long time, I think, I suppose there must have been some sort of comparison in his head that "oh she used to do it like this and you are doing it like that" so</p>	<p><i>She has helped me</i></p> <p><u>She feels her role is positive</u></p> <p><i>Some sort of comparison in his head</i></p> <p><u>She compares herself with another TA – her anxiety to do a good job for</u></p>

<p>He does trust her</p> <p>340</p> <p>She wants to be a good TA for him and to help him</p> <p>350</p> <p>Anxiety about being good enough</p>	<p>maybe, I do not know if that factored into his opinions of me. Yes I would like, I think he does trust when I say this is what I think is the best. As long as I say “this is what I think is the best thing to do, if it was me I would do it like this” then he is much more willing to listen to that than if I had just said “you should do this”. I don’t think that is right, but I suppose it is yes, getting to know the ways around, well I hope, I do not know really, I hope he thinks I have helped him and that I have been approachable. In year six it is quite standoffish especially the last half of it because you are preparing them for secondary school, so I am always there but actually in our class we do have another difficult child which when D is settled in an activity and normally delegated to sitting with the other child, so I am always in the room, well most of the time in the room, but not necessarily. I suppose that must have</p>	<p><u>him</u></p> <p><i>He does trust when I say this is what I think is the best</i></p> <p><u>Trust in her and what she says is right for him</u></p> <p><u>She models it for him and this is better for him – he will trust her more</u></p> <p><u>She uses lots of qualifiers e.g. ‘I hope that’ or ‘I think that’ she doesn’t sound too sure</u></p> <p><u>She wants to be seen to be helpful but isn’t sure. Her anxiety mirrors his anxiety</u></p> <p><u>Change</u></p> <p><i>I am always in the room, well most of the time....but not necessarily</i></p> <p><u>Her role for him is</u></p>
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<p>360 Her role is to help him become more independent and less attached to her</p> <p>Her professional TA role versus her nurturing role</p> <p>370 He trusts her and feels safe with her</p> <p>She had to connect to him first</p> <p>380 Fluctuating TA</p>	<p>affected it as well to be honest.</p> <p>Thinking maybe I am not just there, just for him.</p> <p>Researcher: So how do you think your relationship with D might be different or is different from your relationship with other children?</p> <p>DENA: I suppose from his point of view I would be the person that he would seek clarification with first or if something is wrong he would come to me first before the teacher or anything and D, from my point of view, that I have made the effort to get to know, so I get to know as much as he tells me about his family and things like that, so we have got a bit of a, when we talk about things that he loves, Dr Who, so that was the way in really for the relationship, luckily it was something that I knew a little bit about. Yes sorry</p> <p>I have completely lost the thread of</p>	<p><u>also to show him she's there for others as well</u></p> <p><i>Seek clarification with first</i> <u>She uses impersonal language again as if she tried to distance herself from him.</u> <u>Her role as a TA versus a more nurturing role</u></p> <p><i>He would come to me first</i> <i>I have made the effort to get to know</i></p> <p><i>When we talk about things he loves</i></p> <p><i>That was the way in really for the relationship</i></p> <p><u>He moves between this impersonal role as TA to the nurturing role as a parent – she slips into this and then changes back to</u></p>
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<p>roles</p>	<p>what I was saying, Dr Who distracted me so much.</p> <p>Researcher: No I was just asking about how you think his relationship or your relationship with him might be different from say your relationship with other children in the class or with whom you have worked. I am just interested.</p>	<p><u>more impersonal role when she realises almost as if she feels guilty for this</u></p>
<p>390</p> <p>His independence</p>	<p>DENA: Well I work with a little girl in Year two in the afternoons who is doing her performance and with D it is very different because he is so independent whereas it's more, she is younger anyway, but what the reason she has got a statement as well, everything, she is much more hands on, so in that way the relationship even being an LSA is very different but you</p>	<p><i>He is so independent</i></p> <p>Description of what he is like – his independence</p>
<p>400</p> <p>Fluctuates between personal and impersonal</p>	<p>feel much more involved in their learning and their personal social development as well, more than I do</p>	<p><u>She feels a connection but again it is quite impersonal in use of 'their learning'</u></p>

<p>language – closeness and distance</p>	<p>with the other children in their classes.</p>	
<p>Building a relationship together – strong foundations</p>	<p>Researcher: So what does the relationship mean to you? What sense do you make of it?</p>	
<p>410</p>	<p>DENA: It is very important to me that we sort of built one, not necessarily rushing it to be quite quick but just so that it makes everything work that much smoother if you have got a relationship there to be able to, so it is things like trust or, not so much with D</p>	<p><i>It is very important to me</i> <i>Built one</i></p>
<p>Trust</p>	<p>I suppose but it is a little bit, it's knowing I can trust, if I ask him to do something because we have got that relationship, I know him, that I know depending on what I am asking him to do I can gauge his reaction to it as to whether he will do it or not or whether he will say I do not want to do it and he can be quite stubborn. So it is the, if you have got the relationship beforehand you can work around it</p>	<p><u>Idea of building the relationship together</u></p> <p><u>It takes time</u></p> <p><u>Trust</u></p>
<p>He can depend on her</p>	<p>420</p>	<p><i>Knowing I can trust...because we've got that relationship</i></p>

<p>Her anxiety about working with him at first</p>	<p>and try and put it in a better way that he is more likely to say yes. So you can sort of, yes that is something I think I was a little bit worried about coming in. Although it was not really that far</p>	<p><u>She worried about the relationship – her anxiety</u></p>
<p>430</p>	<p>into the year, missing that first bit of year six that was something that I was</p>	
<p>She felt anxious about the relationship – whether it would work</p>	<p>a little bit worried about, is having to build the relationship while there is so much academic pressure as well, because they have got SATS that they are preparing for constantly so having</p>	<p><i>Worried about is having to build the relationship</i></p>
<p>She cares about him and what will happen to him</p>	<p>the time to be able to build that. Once we had, we did little groups for transition for secondary school and</p>	<p><u>Her doubts in her ability? Or his? To build the relationship</u></p>
<p>440</p>	<p>things and it just made everything run a lot smoother and you get a lot more out of the job as well I think. Being</p>	<p><u>She worries about him – moves to her nurturing role</u></p>
<p>She has invested a lot into the relationship – more than just a job</p>	<p>able, it sort of becomes a bit more than just a job when you’ve got the relationship and you have really invested I suppose in it.</p>	<p>Describes how she supports him and her worries about the pressure</p>
	<p>Researcher: What is the investment?</p>	<p><i>It sort of becomes a bit more than a job when you’ve got the relationship and you’ve really invested I suppose in it</i></p>
		<p><u>Her tension between her role as a TA and her role in developing the relationship</u></p>

<p>450</p> <p>Invested in him to help him make progress but also for his well being</p>	<p>DENA: I do not know. I suppose their development, their skills, their progress you are really – when you build a relationship with anyone you are sort of more invested in their progress and well-being, not that you are not with someone that you have not had a one to one relationship with, do not know. Probably didn’t phrase that right.</p>	<p>Talks about the impact of her support and her investment in him</p> <p><i>More invested in their progress and well-being</i></p> <p><u>Moves from the progress to his well-being – her role shifts</u></p>
<p>460</p> <p>She is sad about separating as she has invested a lot in their relationship</p>	<p>Researcher: So overall how do you kind of feel about this relationship that you have got with D?</p> <p>DENA: Good yes a bit sad that it has been so short and that we have got to the point now where he is coming up to me and asking me for help and it is right at the end, we’re in the last two weeks when he really started doing it. Telling me when he was worried about something and asking me what we</p>	<p><u>She has conflicting emotions about her relationship with him</u></p> <p><u>Feeling she hasn’t had enough time</u> <u>Needs more time</u></p> <p><u>Investment in the relationship</u></p>

<p>470</p> <p>Investment in their relationship – strong attachment</p>	<p>should do to do it, rather than just general help with things. So it is a little bit sad that you get, when you are not with them for that long, you invest so much into it. It has been good and he is lovely to work with. We always have a lovely morning every morning with him.</p> <p>Researcher: Is there anything else about just the experience of working with him, the relationship that you would like to tell me about?</p>	<p><u>Investment in him and the relationship</u></p>
<p>480</p> <p>Anxiety about being good enough</p> <p>490</p>	<p>DENA: Not that I can think of. It has been so useful because I have not been an LSA before, because I am straight out of uni, this is the first place I have worked properly and I was with Y in year two to start off and then with D after Christmas, so it has been really useful being a one to one with a child that is so independent. How you can, because with Y, she is more hands on,</p>	<p><u>Her anxieties about being inexperienced</u></p>

<p>Building a relationship</p> <p>500</p>	<p>you build a relationship quicker</p> <p>because you are physically talking to them all the time and you are doing things, but when it is sort of standing back a little bit it is finding the moments to be able to build the relationship or ask questions about them, but other than that not really.</p> <p>Researcher: That is great thank you very much.</p>	<p><u>Build the relationship</u></p> <p><u>Idea of constructing a relationship over time</u></p>
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Initial Themes	Original transcript	Exploratory Comments
<p data-bbox="240 645 421 719">TA role is to help her</p> <p data-bbox="240 757 464 904">Her difficulties with language and understanding</p> <p data-bbox="240 1016 277 1055">10</p> <p data-bbox="240 1883 464 1991">20 TA role in supporting her</p>	<p data-bbox="504 275 1038 524">Researcher: Okay so first of all can you just tell me about the one to one support that you offer the child that you work with?</p> <p data-bbox="504 636 1046 1480">EMMA: Okay she needs help with most things really English is her second language as well which I think once we crack that it might be slightly easier to help her. She does not understand a great deal. She is getting to understand, she is not really (what is the word I am looking for) it is not really a visual thing that helps her even though we have visual timetables and stuff and she does respond better to commands rather than looking at what she should be doing.</p> <p data-bbox="504 1592 995 1704">Researcher: And the kind of support you offer in the classroom?</p> <p data-bbox="504 1816 1043 1995">EMMA: I am with her all the time in the classroom. Sometimes I let her go trying to get her to mix with the children, the</p>	<p data-bbox="1070 645 1334 752">Description of her needs and the help she needs</p> <p data-bbox="1070 943 1334 1279"><i>She does not understand a great deal</i> <i>Understand</i> <u>Repeated use of understand to emphasise the severity of her needs</u></p> <p data-bbox="1070 1845 1323 1991">Description of her role as TA Developing her social skills</p>

<p>Practical support in class</p> <p>30</p> <p>Her difficulties</p> <p>40</p>	<p>other children in the classroom so I do let her have that time as well and bringing them over to play games with her to see whether she will respond to that. At the moment she is starting to learn letter sounds which we go over getting her to know the children's names in the class, I have pictures of all the children we practise the names and then we play games so she will also pick signs and put them in a post box and things like that.</p> <p>She is nowhere near doing letter formations or numbers or anything like that at the moment so we are trying with holding a pen and stuff like that but she is...its tricky to know where we are at with her really.</p> <p>Researcher: Do you support her at break times as well?</p> <p>EMMA: She has another one to one in the morning that does support her at lunchtime.</p>	<p><u>Her role as TA is to support her learning and develop her social skills</u></p> <p>Describes practical things she does to support E</p> <p><i>It's tricky to know where we are at with her really</i> <u>Unsure about her abilities</u></p>
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<p>50</p> <p>Affectionate</p>	<p>Researcher: But you are not...</p> <p>EMMA: I do not do that.</p> <p>Researcher: I want to think about the relationship now that you have with her. Can you tell me a little bit about that relationship that has formed?</p>	<p><i>She comes straight to me..grabs my hand</i></p> <p><i>She is quite affectionate towards me</i></p> <p><u>Positive statements straightaway about their relationship</u></p> <p><u>Physical and affectionate relationship</u></p>
<p>TA role being strict – setting boundaries</p> <p>60</p> <p>Connection through saying her name</p>	<p>EMMA: She comes straight to me when she sees me and automatically grabs my hand. She is quite affectionate towards me. She will want to sit on my knee... you know not all the time but say for instance if I sat on the floor that is the first place she would go. She does not like it when I say no to her although she has got better at that. I am quite strict with her as well and I think she responds to that quite well. I do feel that she likes me I do get that from her I think and she does say my name which she does not do to a lot of people.</p> <p>Researcher: When she does that how</p>	<p><i>I am quite strict with her...she repsonds to that quite well</i></p> <p><u>Establishes boundaries in their relationship</u></p> <p><i>I do feel she likes me</i></p> <p><u>Again positive statements – this seems to be important to her</u></p> <p><u>Saying her name makes her feel special</u></p>

<p>Connection through name</p> <p>70 Not getting much back</p> <p>80</p> <p>Her communication</p>	<p>does that make you feel when you get that kind of...</p> <p>EMMA: Yeah it's the only thing so she will say my name and then I sort of reply to her but then she will say my name again I am not getting much back from her in that.</p> <p>Researcher: So thinking about...sorry how long have you worked with her?</p> <p>EMMA: Six months.</p> <p>Researcher: Six months?</p> <p>EMMA: Yes</p> <p>Researcher: Thinking then about things that have gone well in that time can you think of particular things particularly in your relationship with her as it's developed?</p> <p>EMMA: She could hardly talk at all</p>	<p><u>Saying her name is important to her</u></p> <p><i>I'm not getting much back from her in that</i></p> <p><u>Given E's lack of connection generally saying the name is important</u></p> <p><u>Communication is an issue</u></p>
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<p>issues</p> <p>Being strict with her</p> <p>Fitting in / conforming</p> <p>90</p> <p>She responds to instructions now</p> <p>Doesn't give much back</p> <p>100</p> <p>Eye contact as connection</p>	<p>when I first started and I think I have helped her a great deal in the last six months just by being strict with her I think before I started she would run off and would not doing anything she was asked to and I think it was going to be quite tricky you know for her to fit in to this school but she is doing it and I think she warmed to me quite well and quite quickly and like I say she responds to most things that I ask her to do now.</p> <p>Researcher: Do you think of particular examples of times when you think the relationship has really developed?</p> <p>EMMA: It is difficult because she does not give a lot back it is kind of hard to think of one particular thing she, possibly I get the most eye contact from her than anybody else she does not give eye contact but I think she gives me probably more than she does to other people?</p> <p>Researcher: And when she does that</p>	<p><i>I've helped her a great deal....just by being strict</i></p> <p><u>Boundaries are important.</u></p> <p><i>To fit in to this school</i></p> <p><u>Fitting in – conforming? Her notion of strictness and boundaries leading to conformity</u></p> <p><u>Her behaviour is important</u></p> <p><i>She does not give a lot back</i></p> <p><u>Distance – lack of connection</u></p> <p><i>She gives me probably more than she does to other people</i></p> <p><u>The connection is there but it's hard work to get it</u></p>
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<p>Rewarding but not emotional</p> <p>Proud at her progress 110</p>	<p>what is that sort of like for you?</p> <p>EMMA: I do get very... well not emotional but I get kind of chuffed I suppose that to me is a big break through that she is doing all that kind of stuff from where she was at when I first started?</p>	<p><i>Well not emotional but I get kind of chuffed</i> <u>She won't allow herself to feel emotional - is this because that is not seen to be her job? Boundaries again Her role as TA is to support not be emotional</u></p>
<p>Never hit her</p> <p>Strictness defines relationship and behaviour 120</p>	<p>Researcher: And have there been times that you have been working her where you would say that sort of relationship has not gone so well?</p> <p>EMMA: No she has hit other people but she has never hit me she has never been cross with me she has never... when she used to through tantrums but she has never done that for me so I do not know whether it is the different style of ...like I say I am quite strict.</p>	<p><i>Never hit me Never been cross with me</i></p> <p><i>I am quite strict <u>Again the emphasis on 'strict'</u></i></p>
<p>Liking</p> <p>Smiling as connection</p>	<p>Researcher: How do you think she feels about you and your relationship with her?</p>	<p><i>She likes me</i></p>

<p>Communication difficulties</p> <p>Happy to see TA 130</p> <p>Special relationship</p> <p>140</p> <p>Using voice to calm her</p>	<p>EMMA: I do generally think she likes me. Like I say when she sees me she does smile and she will come straight to me so I do think she ...I mean she would never know how to say how she feels obviously but from her just the way she looks at me and stuff I would say that she is quite happy when she sees me in the afternoon. As I say in the morning sometimes they would say how she has been and then I get totally different to how she has been but I do not know whether that is just because it is different times in the day or whether that is me.</p> <p>Researcher: Yes, I would be interested to know what you think it is about you and your relationship that would be different I suppose in all the things you are saying or indeed the other children that you have worked with?</p> <p>EMMA: I do not know sometimes I mean, maybe just even my voice might even be kind of calming to her I do not</p>	<p><u>She feels positive about the relationship through E coming to her and smiling</u></p> <p><i>I get totally different to how she has been</i></p> <p><u>A special relationship – it's different between them</u></p> <p><i>Or whether that is me</i></p> <p><i>My voice might even be kind of calming to her</i></p> <p><u>Voice is interesting in the context of a child who struggles</u></p>
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<p>150</p> <p>There for her</p> <p>TA role as mediator - guide</p> <p>Being part of the group - normalising</p> <p>160</p> <p>Feeling proud when she connects with others</p>	<p>know like I say it is really tricky</p> <p>Researcher: And the things that you might feel to develop your relationship further with her, what kind of things do you think is important you would need to do that?</p> <p>EMMA: Just as long as she knows I am there for her I think that helps a great deal and just trying to include the other children with her she likes being part of the group which she did not use to. She would never let anyone sit and play with her before and now she does...I mean yesterday I helped her do a mask and one of the other little boys came over and said could he help whereas normally she would not allow that but I kind of asked her and she was yeah... well she didn't say yeah but told her that was what was happening and she was fine with it.</p> <p>She... I do not know...I kind of lost my train of thoughts.</p>	<p><u>to communicate.</u></p> <p><u>Her voice is calming</u></p> <p><u>whereas E struggles</u></p> <p><u>to have a voice</u></p> <p><i>As long as she knows I'm there for her</i></p> <p><u>Trust and Security</u></p> <p><u>are important</u></p> <p>Description of how she has improved in her play</p> <p><u>Feelings of accomplishment</u></p> <p><u>and pride when she</u></p> <p><u>makes connections</u></p> <p><u>with others</u></p>
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<p>170</p> <p>Consistency between adults</p> <p>Working together</p> <p>180</p> <p>Happiness at her progress</p>	<p>Researcher: We were just talking about the things that you think might be important in developing that relationship further.</p> <p>EMMA: Yes.</p> <p>Researcher: What you would need or what you would feel you would need?</p> <p>EMMA: I think we need more...well not more support but just every adult on board and perhaps doing the same things with her would help. Obviously if we are all going off different pages it is not going to help her particularly.</p> <p>Researcher: And I suppose thinking about the time you have spent with her and that relationship that you have developed over the time what does it mean to you?</p> <p>EMMA: It makes me happy when she does things that I never thought she</p>	<p><i>Just every adult on board</i></p> <p><u>Teamwork between adults – all pulling together</u></p> <p><u>She needs consistency</u></p> <p><i>When she does things that I never thought she would be capable of</i></p> <p><u>Feelings of pride in her progress</u></p>
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<p>190</p> <p>Reward from seeing her progress</p> <p>Attachment – not becoming too attached</p> <p>Not too intense 200</p> <p>Don’t want her to become over reliant</p> <p>Independence</p>	<p>would be capable of so you know every day she surprises me which is really lovely</p> <p>Researcher: Is there anything else when you sort of think about your relationship, the sense you make of it, how you feel about that relationship?</p> <p>EMMA: I would have been sad if I did not have her again next year I want to see her progress and I think. I obviously don’t want her to become too attached to me either so it is tricky because I do think she needs to mix about more and get used to other adults. I do not want it to be a too intense relationship</p> <p>Researcher: Why not?</p> <p>EMMA: Because I do not want her to rely on me too much because I think she needs to... well you know she needs to progress and some of that needs to be...most of that needs to be on her terms</p>	<p><u>Sadness if she wasn’t able to work with her again. Feeling a connection and positive relationship with E</u></p> <p><i>I obviously don’t want her to become too attached to me</i></p> <p><u>Idea of attachment being a negative thing – of the relationship being too intense</u></p> <p><u>Again she sets boundaries to the relationship</u></p> <p><u>Her role as TA is not to get too close or encourage dependence</u></p> <p><u>This will stop her progress</u></p> <p><i>On her terms not on me telling her</i></p>
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<p>210</p> <p>Dependence</p>	<p>not on me telling her.</p> <p>Researcher: And tell me about that attachment at the moment where is it what do you feel about that?</p> <p>EMMA: I think actually kind of having somebody else in the morning has kind of helped her speak to more adults actually and so for me now although she is still happy to see me she is not so that she is</p>	<p><u>Doesn't want to encourage dependence</u> <u>Her role as TA is to develop a wide range of skills not dependence on her</u></p>
<p>220</p> <p>Detachment – Intensity of relationship</p>	<p>by my side the whole time, she will go off and she is very interested in what other people's names are you know adult wise she looks at everybody's pictures and says who is this a lot so I do not think she is solely attached to me I do think she could... I am trying to not make it as such an intense relationship.</p> <p>Researcher: And finally I suppose is overall is there other things that you</p>	<p><u>Attachment</u></p> <p><i>Intense relationship</i></p>
<p>230</p> <p>Joy to see her</p>	<p>know you want to sort of say about your relationship with her and experiences you have had the time you have worked with</p>	

<p>make progress especially socially</p> <p>240</p>	<p>her?</p> <p>EMMA: Really why I said okay... already it is such a joy to see her progress every week not necessarily in her literacy and numeracy I think she is way off that as such but just socially it is been really lovely to see and we say often you know six months ago we would never have thought that she was capable of where she is now</p> <p>Researcher: Brilliant thank you very much</p>	<p><i>It is such as joy to see her progress every week</i></p> <p><u>Her role as a TA is to help her progress</u></p>
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Initial Themes	Original transcript	Exploratory Comments
<p>Her role as TA Not much of a support 10</p>	<p>Researcher: First of all just tell me about the support you offer whoever it is. I don’t know what the child’s name is.</p>	
	<p>FRANCES: So I am one to one support. So I work as an LSA, which is basically a one to one and he needs ... it is generally sitting next to him and going through his work with him. It is not much of a support. There is a lot of chunking. So any piece of information the teacher gives to me I immediately have to look at it and assess it for him and think how he can address it. So he is of the extreme I think, the autistic.</p>	<p>Description of her support</p> <p>Describes her role as TA with him</p> <p><i>It is not much of a support</i> <u>Seems quite negative to start</u></p> <p><i>He is of the extreme I think autistic</i></p>
<p>He is bright but will choose not to do things Refusal 20</p>	<p>Researcher: Okay, in what sense?</p> <p>FRANCES: Well, he is not ... he is quite bright and so he can any of the work that I am given for him to do. Most of the time he just does not want</p>	<p>Description of his ability</p> <p><i>He can do any of the work that I am given for him to do</i> <i>Most of the time he just does not want to</i> Description of his behaviour</p>

<p>30</p> <p>40</p>	<p>to. So behaviourally he will just put his head on the table and just not want to do it. Unless it is something that interests him, specifically or just dragons or Pokémon or cats. There are certain things that you can bring in to make ... if it is something that you really need him to do a piece of writing, you can allow him to bring the characters in to make it more interesting, but when you are doing maths and things like that it is much harder to make it more interesting in the same way, but also he is going to be going into year 6 next year so, he is going to be doing his Sats at the end of the year so, he needs to start getting ready for that anyway and having to do whatever is given to him. I am not sure if they will manage that next year.</p> <p>Researcher: And what about break times, playtimes and the rest of the times. How is that?</p>	<p>Description of his interests</p> <p><i>He needs to start getting ready for that</i></p> <p><i>I am not sure if they will manage that next year</i></p> <p><u>Negative view of what he will do</u></p>
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<p>50</p> <p>His social difficulties</p>	<p>FRANCES: He does not have ... I think they have ... I do not support him break times or at lunchtimes specifically, that is when I have my break and lunch. They do have a designated member of staff, I think, at lunchtime and at break to keep an eye on him. He is not very socially able, because he wants to play his games, his way, which is I think the kind of standard, that he wants to do and does not really want to listen to anyone else's ideas or do what they want to do, he wants it to be, so, he finds it very difficult to make friends and we have tried bubble grouping before and things and I do not think they worked particularly well for him.</p>	<p><i>He is not very socially able</i> Describes his personality</p>
<p>60</p> <p>He is self-centred Struggles to make friends</p>	<p>not really want to listen to anyone else's ideas or do what they want to do, he wants it to be, so, he finds it very difficult to make friends and we have tried bubble grouping before and things and I do not think they worked particularly well for him.</p> <p>Researcher: And thinking then about your relationship with him over the period of time you have worked with him. How would you describe your relationship? Tell me a bit about that relationship.</p>	<p><i>Does not really want to listen to anyone else's ideas</i></p> <p><u>Issue of him being self-centred and finding it difficult to make friends</u></p> <p><u>Again quite a negative focus on things he can't do</u></p>

<p>He is gentle and she feels safe with him</p> <p>70</p> <p>Her anxiety about his size – what he might do</p> <p>He responds well to her – but she struggles to connect with him</p> <p>80</p> <p>She struggles to know how he feels</p> <p>Her anxieties about whether she is any good at supporting him</p> <p>Anxiety about pushing him hard – she holds back</p> <p>90</p> <p>Struggles to establish a connection</p>	<p>FRANCES: I started with him in February this year, I think. He is a very gentle giant so, he is a very gentle ... I do not feel vulnerable at all being with him at all, even though he is quite big. He is in year 5, but he is aged year 6. So, he is a big lad and if he really does not want to do something, he could probably ... he has tried to shut me in the cupboard once so, that is alright. I think he is lovely boy and he seems to respond quite well to me, but only obviously when I am not making him do something he does not want to do. It is odd, you do not know how he feels about a particular ... I have no idea. Whether he is indifferent, because he has me in the morning and then another lady in the afternoon. He may moan about her to me and then in the other extreme, he probably ... you just do not know. I think for me, I do not push him as hard as I could because he is new to me, I do not know what</p>	<p><i>He is a very gentle giant</i> <i>Gentle</i> <u>Emphasis on his size but he is gentle and she doesn't feel vulnerable</u></p> <p><i>He has tried to shut me in the cupboard once...that is alright</i> <u>Why is that alright?</u></p> <p><i>He seems to respond quite well to me</i> <u>Her need to feel valued</u></p> <p><i>You do not know how he feels...I have no idea</i> <u>Idea that she struggles to know how he feels – she seems anxious about this and about the fact that he might complain to the other TA who works with him about her</u></p> <p><i>I do not push him as hard as I could</i> <u>Why not? Is there an anxiety about working with him – a fear?</u></p>
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<p>Uses impersonal language to describe him</p> <p>She isn't learning or progressing</p> <p>Egocentric view</p> <p>It's a struggle / battle with him</p> <p>100</p> <p>She doesn't understand him</p> <p>110</p> <p>Her role as TA supporting him in practical tasks</p> <p>It's a battle to</p>	<p>levels he is working at realistically so I am going in there ... going, well we are getting something done and you do not know, it is very difficult working with a child like this. You do not feel like you are progressing. You do not feel like you are learning from one day to the next, particularly ... with most children you can see their progression, with him it is a very slow ... it will be a much slower increment and because it is more that he does not want to do it, you are not sure which is ... you do not do, which ones it is because I cannot do it. So it is learning how to read him as an individual which is much harder I think.</p> <p>Researcher: How do you think you have got on with that? Or how would you read him?</p> <p>FRANCES: Well, I am beginning to understand ... I know that in English and writing and things I have done a lot</p>	<p><u>Anxiety about not knowing about him</u></p> <p><i>Working with a child like this</i></p> <p><u>Impersonal use of a 'a child like this' and issue of difficulty working with him</u></p> <p><i>Do not feel like you are learning</i></p> <p><u>Her learning or his?</u></p> <p><u>Struggle</u></p> <p><u>Battle with him</u></p> <p><i>Learning to read him as an individual which is much harder</i></p> <p><u>She struggles with establishing a relationship</u></p> <p>She describes her support in class</p>
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<p>get him to do things</p> <p>120</p> <p>130</p> <p>Impersonal language ‘a child’ ‘them’</p> <p>Depersonalises it as she struggles to connect</p> <p>Parental role</p>	<p>of scribing for him actually, he is quite able to write a lot more but the thing is, with scribing for him is if he has got an interesting story that he wants to get down he will not write it if he thinks he has got to write it himself, he might write a short story. So I do try and scribe or we take it in turns, I will do a paragraph and he will do a paragraph. I forgot what the question was.</p> <p>Researcher: Yes, really, just how in your relationship with him, you said about reading him or it is difficult to read him, I was thinking how has that gone in ...</p> <p>FRANCES: It is really hard to read a child ... You have to get to know them really well to know whether they just ... it is the same as any child you have, I expect with your own children, you start knowing their different cries, you start knowing what is going on dealing with them, it is the same with him</p>	<p>Describes his capabilities</p> <p><u>Battle getting him to do things he doesn’t want to do</u></p> <p><u>Describes role as TA</u></p> <p><i>Really hard to read a child</i></p> <p><u>Impersonal use of ‘a child’ and not his name. Talks in the abstract and lacks a connection with him</u></p> <p><u>Talks about being a parent and compares it with his relationship</u></p> <p><i>Knowing their different cries</i></p>
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<p>140</p> <p>His communication difficulties affect their relationship</p> <p>His frustration reflects her frustration in the relationship</p>	<p>because he is not going to tell you how he is feeling about something. If he does not want to do it he will just put his head on the table but he will also do that if he cannot do it. He will get frustrated if he does not want to do it and he gets frustrated when he cannot do it. What I am laying out ... he is quite able to do most of the things we give him. It is then setting how much to do, but reading him, it is difficult to read him.</p>	<p><i>He is not going to tell you how he is feeling</i></p> <p><u>His communication difficulties make the relationship difficult</u></p> <p>Repeats use of ‘frustration’ <u>Her frustration at struggling to connect with him.</u></p>
<p>150</p> <p>She finds it hard to define their relationship</p> <p>160</p> <p>Blames other</p>	<p>Researcher: I am just thinking, I suppose, particularly in how you feel about, how you are connecting with him or him with you and your relationship and how that is developing, I suppose.</p> <p>FRANCES: We have a relationship, he does listen to me, he does – we have had a tricky couple of weeks because these last couple of weeks has ... there has not been enough structure in the</p>	<p><i>it is difficult to read him</i> <u>her frustration at not being able to understand him</u></p> <p><i>we have a relationship doesn’t qualify the relationship</i></p> <p>Describes recent difficulties due to lack of structure</p>

<p>things</p> <p>170</p> <p>His difficulties with change and lack of structure are also her difficulties</p> <p>Depersonalises him</p> <p>180</p> <p>Struggles are because of others not supporting her</p>	<p>day, because there is ... he is in the year 5 split class, so the year 6's are leaving and they are going, they are doing a lot of play rehearsals and they are doing all sorts of different things. So he is involved in whatever is going on but it means that everyday is a different day rather than doing maths literacy, having a structured day he has not had that so he has found that quite difficult and I have struggled quite a lot with that because everyday I will come in and the teacher will say "not sure what we are doing today, it might be in this order, it might be in that order" and you need to prepare a child like him to hit it, so he knows. It has been quite bitty. I think we have struggled a bit because I am not given any work to do with him specifically and so he is in ... I am having to kind of ... say ... "let's do" ... he loves reading, an amazing reader, so let's do 10 minutes reading, 10 minutes but the thing is with him, with F, he will be ... he expects</p>	<p>Describes difficulties in structure of school day</p> <p><u>His difficulties with lack of structure</u></p> <p><i>And I have struggled quite a lot with that</i></p> <p><u>Her difficulties with coping with lack of structure mirror his difficulties</u></p> <p><i>You need to prepare a child like him</i></p> <p><u>Impersonal use of 'a child like him' reverts to her TA role – lacks connection</u></p> <p><u>Talks of her struggles – she has to organise things for him to do</u></p> <p><u>Frustration at this</u></p> <p><u>Positive about his reading</u></p> <p><u>But he needs rewards</u></p>
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<p>His behaviour has improved 190</p>	<p>rewards an awful lot because up to this day his behaviour has improved vastly since he started here from what I can gather, I have only been with him ... he used to get these increments, rewards and it is always a computer but he is starting to demand them rather than earn them and expect them even when he has not done anything so we are</p>	<p><i>His behaviour has improved vastly</i> <u>Positive about his behaviour</u></p>
<p>A struggle / battle in their relationship as she sets tighter boundaries 200</p>	<p>having a struggle, him and I are ... our relationship is struggling at the moment because I have got to start setting more, harder boundaries because he is not going to get any next year, realistically, rewards will go right down. So I am</p>	<p><i>We are having a struggle</i> <u>Her battle with him to set boundaries</u> <i>Our relationship is struggling at the moment</i></p>
<p>Her anxiety about his future</p>	<p>having, it is kind of weird where I do not know what he needs to reach to get a reward and what he should ... I have</p>	<p><u>Her anxiety about the future for him</u></p>
<p>Her frustration with not knowing about what to with him 210</p>	<p>just been doing bit and pieces with him. We have done a bit of clockwork, and then he has read for 10 minutes and then a bit of comprehension and then he has read for 10 minutes while they have been doing play rehearsals because he cannot do the play</p>	<p><u>Her feelings of frustration about what he needs</u> Description of the work she does with him her role as TA</p>

<p>Frustration when he can't do something</p>	<p>rehearsals, it is so repetitive, they are too long, we have done play rehearsals ... four, five mornings of a week which is not what ... he cannot ... he cannot do that. He gets bored and then he starts moaning and then he starts wandering around and he gets destructive. You have to take him out and he is not really, the year 5's are not really in the play, they are singing, but they are not really performing, so to sit, he does not sing.</p>	<p><u>Her frustration at what he can't do</u></p> <p><i>He cannot...he cannot do that</i></p> <p><u>Emphasis of 'cannot' shows her frustration</u></p> <p><i>He gets bored he gets destructive</i></p> <p><u>Her frustrations at what he can't do and his behaviour</u></p>
<p>220</p>	<p>Researcher: How do you feel about that then at the moment, in terms of the way that is going?</p>	
<p>Unhappiness Lack of support</p> <p>230</p> <p>Uncertainty at what to do with him due to lack of support</p>	<p>FRANCES: I am not happy with it at the moment. The whole situation is very difficult. The teacher I am working with is leaving, she has washed her hands of every bit and then for me as well, because she has had enough. It leaves me and him slightly in this weird little bubble of having to</p>	<p>Description of her unhappiness</p> <p><i>The whole situation is very difficult</i></p> <p><i>She has washed her hands of every bit and then for me as well.</i></p> <p><u>Her extreme frustration at being left not knowing what to do</u></p> <p><u>Uncertainty</u></p>

<p>Her role as TA not teacher</p> <p>240</p>	<p>try and keep ourselves busy without anything properly set and I am not a teacher. I am packed at five, I will find things and do things with him but I am not sure what we need to achieve everyday.</p> <p>Researcher: So how do you think that has affected your relationship, if at all?</p>	<p><u>Frustration at her lack of direction</u></p>
<p>Her role as TA is to support him</p> <p>250</p> <p>Feel a lack of support and structure upsets him and her</p> <p>Togetherness against others</p>	<p>FRANCES: He is now, because he has got me and I am a little bit, I am ... no one else is working, I do not think he should be then sitting down and drilling, because everyone else is practising, he has had quite a lax week, so that is why coming back in today and we have had a bit more structure ..., he has been very upset at the world and does not want to do it. I do not want to do it and it was quite a simple task to do but it was not one that he wanted to do having had a couple of weeks of quiet, lax, wiggly anyway.</p>	<p><i>Because he has got me</i></p> <p><u>She expresses trust in her ability to help him</u></p> <p><u>Her role as TA is to support him – to help him make progress and this is being frustrated by a lack of direction from others</u></p> <p><i>He has been very upset at the world</i></p> <p><u>She is also upset at other people not helping them</u></p> <p><u>She uses ‘we’ here – a suggestion of them together</u></p>

<p>260</p> <p>Feelings of whether she is tough enough</p> <p>Anxiety about doing the right thing</p>	<p>Researcher: Yes.</p> <p>FRANCES: I think the afternoons have been much more structured. The lady that has him in the afternoon is tough, she has had much more experience of him and also doing this job. She has been doing it for five years, I am very new to it all.</p> <p>Researcher: How important do you think that is in terms of ...?</p> <p>FRANCES: In terms of him?</p> <p>Researcher: ... of him,</p> <p>FRANCES: I think he needs someone with much more</p>	<p><i>Tough</i></p> <p><u>She emphasises her lack of toughness and lack of experience</u></p> <p><u>Her anxiety to do the right thing</u></p>
<p>270</p> <p>Feels she has a lack of experience</p>	<p>Researcher: and your relationship ...</p> <p>FRANCES: He needs someone with much more experience.</p>	<p><i>He needs someone with him much more</i></p> <p><u>She isn't able to be there enough for him</u></p> <p><i>Someone with more experience</i></p> <p><u>She doesn't feel she is experienced enough</u></p>

<p>Anxieties about lack of training</p>	<p>Researcher: Right.</p> <p>FRANCES: In his file it specifically says, should have someone with autistic training, this, that and the other and I have not had any training.</p> <p>Researcher: Right.</p> <p>FRANCES: I am a mother of three children, that was about it.</p>	<p>She describes her lack of autistic training</p> <p><u>Her feelings that she is not good enough or experienced enough. She doesn't have the training</u></p>
<p>280</p> <p>The job is more than being a mother</p> <p>290</p> <p>Frustration about lack of support</p>	<p>Researcher: Do you think that has helped you at all?</p> <p>FRANCES: Being mother of three? No. It helps me but what it has not helped me with is what happens if I have got three young children who are high maintenance before I come to school. I come to school to a very high maintenance boy in school, then I do an afternoon with, supposed to be less maintenance, a gentle, a really lovely boy but he has got a troublesome child</p>	<p><u>She's a mother but that's not enough</u></p> <p><u>She doesn't feel her role as mother helps her in her relationship</u></p> <p><u>High maintenance</u> <u>Her struggles as a mother and a TA</u></p> <p><u>Hard work. A battle</u></p> <p><u>Frustrations about her not feeling supported</u></p>

<p>Anxiety about not being able to do the job properly</p> <p>Exhausting</p>	<p>in his class I end up with and then I go home to my three ... so I have just stretched myself far too thinly. I find that my relationship at home has suffered because I have used it all up ... all my patience is used up during the day.</p> <p>Researcher: Right. With F?</p> <p>FRANCES: Yes.</p> <p>Researcher: Okay. Are there times when things have gone ... well you have just talked about obviously quite difficult times?</p> <p>FRANCES: Yes, yes.</p> <p>Researcher: And you have explained very clearly about that but I just wonder ...</p>	<p><i>I have just stretched myself far too thinly</i> <u>Her feelings of not being able to do the job properly</u> <u>The affect her job has on her home life</u></p> <p><i>All my patience is used up during the day</i></p> <p><u>This is hard work for her and emotionally draining</u></p>
<p>300</p> <p>310</p>	<p>FRANCES: We have had some really</p>	

<p>320</p> <p>Pride in his achievements</p> <p>330</p>	<p>Researcher: ... in the time you have ... some good times ...</p> <p>FRANCES: There was a dress-up day, so there were two events that Y just came out of his ... we had to dress up as a favourite book and he came in as a cat, from his cat warrior books and he has never stood up in front of the class before, so usually he will go out, so if you have to present something to the class, he will go out and he will present it to you, or maybe another child or something but, this ... he stood up in front of the class, in his cat costume and told everyone about his book and that was a really proud moment, the fact that he could do that and was happy to do that, it was lovely, I think for him as well.</p> <p>Researcher: So you felt quite proud of him?</p>	<p><u>Describes good times that she has had with Y</u></p> <p><i>That was a really proud moment</i> <u>Her sense of pride in him</u></p> <p><i>It was lovely I think for him as well</i> <u>A sense of achievement for them both</u></p> <p><i>You build up a massive relationship with the children, they are not your own</i></p> <p><u>Build up – again a sense of the slow</u></p>
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<p>Building up a relationship</p> <p>Feelings of responsibility for him</p> <p>340 Invests a lot in the relationship</p> <p>Relationship has been difficult</p> <p>350 Invest a lot in it for little back</p> <p>Lacks an emotional connection</p>	<p>FRANCES: I was really proud of him, you build up a massive relationship with the children, they are not your own, but you are responsible for them every morning, in my case, you are the thing that makes them get from A to B, gets them to do the work they need to do, helps them emotionally, educationally, in everything ... you are completely involved in this, in his morning.</p> <p>Researcher: And that, thinking about what the relationship means to you, can you talk a bit, what sense do you make of it, what does it mean to you?</p> <p>FRANCES: What does it mean to me? I have struggled with it to be honest. It is quite taking, he is taking from you, you do not get very much back really. With autistic children they do not ask you how your weekend is or whatever. My afternoon child would but Y would not. I'll say did you have a nice</p>	<p><u>construction of a relationship</u></p> <p><u>She feels responsible for him and for his progress</u></p> <p><i>Emotionally, educationally, in everything</i> <i>You are completely involved in this</i></p> <p><u>She is important to him</u></p> <p><i>I have struggled to be honest</i> <u>Her struggle to get a relationship with Y</u></p> <p><u>She feels that she has to give so much of herself and gets little back</u> <u>A sense that she needs the emotional connection but struggles with it</u></p>
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<p>360 Her feelings of sadness that he doesn't ask about her or know about her</p> <p>Giving all the time</p>	<p>weekend and he will say "yes", I did this, this and this and that will be the end of that conversation. Which is most children are quite self-centred aren't they but autistic children are all more so. I do not think he even knows what I did before I became the LSA, I do not think he has any interest as to where I come from or that I have children at the school or any of that. I find it a difficult relationship because you are giving all the time</p>	<p><i>I do not think he even knows what I did before I became the LSA</i></p> <p><i>...he has any interest as to where I come from</i></p> <p><u>Her sense of sadness that he doesn't know about her or shows little interest in her as a person.</u></p>
<p>370</p> <p>Trust in her</p>	<p>Researcher: Is there ... thinking about your overall experience, since you have been working with him, you have talked about, obviously, it is a difficult relationship, we have also talked about a lots of other things, how would you sum it up in terms of you and him and your relationship?</p>	<p><i>He trusts me</i></p> <p><u>Trust – he trusts her</u></p>
<p>His lack of care for her and emotional connection</p> <p>Her role as TA – its just a job</p>	<p>FRANCES: I think ... he trusts me, he does not listen to me, which is lovely, you do not feel like you are</p>	<p><i>I do not know if he cares at all</i></p> <p><u>Her uncertainty about whether he cares for her – this is important for her in the relationship</u></p> <p><i>It's a job</i></p>

<p>380</p> <p>Not emotionally attached – and yet she’d like to be</p> <p>His difficulties affect the relationship</p> <p>Doesn’t give anything back</p> <p>390</p> <p>Her anxiety about lack of experience</p> <p>Not being tough enough</p>	<p>fighting a battle, I do not know if he cares at all although ... for me, I do not know, I think I am ... it is a job, isn't it, this is what I am doing, I am working with him, that is what my role is. You try, I am not emotionally attached ... very difficult to be emotionally attached to this particular child.</p> <p>Researcher: Okay, why is that do you think?</p> <p>FRANCES: Because he is quite a difficult boy. He is not ... he just does not ... he does not give you anything back at all. I am not working with him next year and I am quite relieved.</p> <p>Researcher: Okay.</p> <p>FRANCES: I think he needs a much stronger, especially at this age,</p> <p>Researcher: Needs a stronger what?</p>	<p><u>Her role as TA is used to justify her struggles with the relationship.</u></p> <p><i>I am not emotionally attached..very difficult to be emotionally attached to this particular child</i></p> <p><u>She wants to be emotionally attached to him but has struggled so uses her role as TA as defence</u></p> <p><u>She wants something back from him and doesn’t get it</u></p> <p><u>Her relief at not working with him next year</u></p> <p><u>Her feelings of inadequacy over her lack of experience</u></p> <p><u>She doesn’t feel she’s tough enough</u></p>
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<p>400</p> <p>She tries to connect but gets nothing back</p>	<p>FRANCES: ... someone who has more experience with children and is much ... I am quite gentle, I think I am quite gentle in my approach, I am not as tough ... I bend the rules a little bit if I think it is going to ... if I think he can borrow a book from early play because he is enjoying, I will ask early play if I can borrow it whereas I have been told I should not have borrowed the book from early play because that</p>	<p>Description of her borrowing a book for him</p> <p><u>She bends the rules and does things to try and connect with him but gets nothing back</u></p>
<p>410</p>	<p>is no why ... he was enjoying the book and he was quiet and it gave me a resource to go ... okay, as a reward, you can have this book for 10 minutes, then we can do something else. But it is not about the actual cost ...</p> <p>Researcher: Final question, really I suppose, what, if you were to continue working with him, what things do you think would be important to develop your relationship with him or to, in your relationship with him?</p>	
<p>420</p> <p>His difficulties</p>		<p>Description of his needs – social needs</p>

<p>with making friends</p> <p>He is better now at making friends</p> <p>Her feelings of loneliness – it’s a solitary job 430</p> <p>Solitary</p> <p>440</p>	<p>FRANCES: He needs to learn to make some friends, I think for him, he used to sit and face the wall for the first three months I was with him. It has only been in the last month ... they have moved him on to a table with other children and that social interaction is actually really nice and it is nice for me as well as for him because when he is facing the wall he is a very solitary job. It is very solitary ... I do not know if he realises how solitary it is but for me it is a very solitary environment because you are working with somebody facing the wall. To turn him around, bringing him into a group is really important, I think for him, I think also for the person working with him because you are not then on your own with him, you are with him with other children, otherwise it is a really solitary job to do.</p> <p>Researcher: Right</p>	<p><u>She sees positives in his social development</u></p> <p><i>He realises how solitary it is for me</i> <u>Her sadness at not being able to connect in the relationship – her loneliness in the job</u></p> <p><u>Solitary</u></p>
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<p>It is hard working with him and developing a relationship</p> <p>450 She needs and emotional connection which hasn't been there with him</p> <p>460</p>	<p>FRANCES: I work with him in the morning and I work with G in the afternoon, so in the morning, I do not know his class that well, because I do not get to interact with them because he is so intensive. In the afternoon I know all the kids, I know everything about them, they are all delightful. I am going to miss them when they leave, they are totally different. I have built up a totally different relationship with the kids in that class than I have with F, because he is so insular, he does not know how to open out to anybody.</p> <p>Researcher: Right</p> <p>FRANCES: Or he is not willing to particularly, on his rules.</p> <p>Researcher: Okay. Thank you</p>	<p><u>She acknowledges how hard it is working with him</u></p> <p><u>She needs to feel that emotional connection to feel successful</u></p>
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